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KINDNESS IN WOMEN.

TALES

BY

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY.

“ Kindness in women, not their beauteous looks,
Shall win my love.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

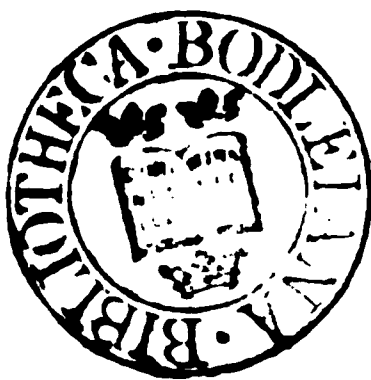
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1837.

334 .



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P R E F A C E.

THE proof sheets of this work were revised by the Author when he was but imperfectly recovered from a dangerous illness, and little capable of any exertion.

His stories are as dissimilar as possible; therefore they who derive no amusement from *one*, may possibly be pleased with the *other*. Strange as the incidents of his first tale may appear, they are founded on fact; but his characters and localities are all imaginary.

Athenæum Club,
August 1, 1837.

KATE LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

Just like childhood's sunny mirth
When it looks on nature first,
Thy gay fountain gushes forth
From the grot where it was nurst;
And as like to man's career
Thy maturity is made;
Now a smile, and now a tear,
Now in sunshine, now in shade.
Rapid river! rapid river!
I could moralise for ever,
Yes for ever, and for ever,
I could moralise on thee!

“ I WILL go to my mamma's room,” cried little George Hanson, struggling with the maid who endeavoured to detain him, and kicking with all his might at the closed door of his nursery : “ I will go, Biggin ; if you don't let me go, I 'll break myself to bits.”

So said, or rather shrieked, the only child of the widowed Lady William Hanson ; but, instead of evincing any inclination to do violence to his own person, the whole energies of his little mind and body seemed concentrated in a passionate endeavour to intimidate, maim, or destroy his gentle and long-suffering attendant Mrs. Biggin.

Mrs. Biggin indeed seemed gentle, but her gentleness was the result of her mistress's mandate : " Biggin," said her ladyship, " never thwart my boy in anything ; premature severity spoils the temper, and breaks the spirit." The servant therefore defended her shins from kicks, and her arms from pinches, as best she could ; and Master George, knowing by experience that sooner or later his dear mamma, alarmed at his vehemence, would send for him and soothe him, screamed and kicked more lustily than ever.

In a lower apartment of the same mansion sat Lady William Hanson, before a mirror which stood upon an ample toilet-table, stored with essences and cosmetics. The lady's face

was buried in a cambric pocket-handkerchief; and behind her stood Mistress Fane, her own maid, who spoke in a bland and soothing tone of voice while she removed from the table that extremely unbecoming article of dress, a widow's cap.

“Don't take on so, my lady,” said the handmaid; “sure, there's a time for all things; and, seeing that you've worn these here caps for twelve long calendar months, this being the day——”

“I know it, don't speak to me,” cried Lady William; “it's the melancholy anniversary!”

“I'm sure, my lady,” said the abigail, “I'd not presume to intrude for the world; but what can't be cured, you know——”

“True, Fane, true—you are right; but——” and the lady paused and shook her head.

“I know by experience what you suffers, my lady; not that I'd presume to draw comparisons between my poor dear dead John and—and——”

An impatient gesture of the widow interrupted the attendant; but, adroitly skipping

the name of her deceased master, she immediately continued :

“ But it was better, my lady, that John should die, than live to be a cumbrance with age and 'firmities: you are still young, my lady, and I'm sure you look no age at all like; and though I'd be the last person to 'sinuate that you'd form *at present* any second—hem !”

Another gesture here cut short her sentence ; but again she skipped the offensive expression, and again addressed her lady.

“ It would be a sin to bury your persingal advantages any longer.”

“ I believe you are right, Fane,” replied Lady William, glancing complacently at her mirror, which reflected a countenance comely enough considering that its fair proprietor had numbered forty years. “ Yes, you are right ; and I ought not to give way to regrets which are unavailing.”

“ Then I may remove the cap ?” inquired Fane ; and, not waiting for a reply, she placed artificial flowers before her mistress, and threw the *weeds* aside.

“ I cannot wear these to-day, Fane,” said Lady William. “ They are old and tumbled ; to-morrow, if I *must* again wear colours, you may summon my milliner and dress-maker. But, hark ! what can be the matter ; don’t you hear that noise ?”

“ Oh yes, my lady,” said Fane, “ it is only Master George a-skirmishing to come and kiss his mamma ; but now you’re a-going to enter society again, it won’t do for the child never to be happy without your ladyship.”

“ Very true, Fane, if I *must* go out ; (and I suppose my spirits will require change of scene ;) Georgy can’t be *always* with me, as he has been during my year of mourning.”

“ He’s been your plaything like, my lady ; but, oh the powers, listen to that !”

And the whole house resounded with the screams of the child, who, accompanied by Mrs. Biggin, approached the apartment of Lady William. The door flew open, and in rushed the infuriated little urchin, who ran to take refuge with his mamma ; while Biggin meekly followed, and, dropping a curtsy,

said, "I comes to make a complaint, if you please, my lady; for Master George is so head-strong there's no guiding him."

Master George Hanson was, at the period at which our tale commences, eight years of age. His lady-mother had been the only daughter of an apothecary, who, in the neighbouring town of Danesford, had realised a competency, having been for many years before his death an alderman, and once a mayor. Danesford was a watering-place; and Alderman Gubbins and his lady, when their daughter Fanny grew up, left the old house with the dispensary attached, and took a residence in a more fashionable street. Fanny Gubbins was a handsome girl, and she had acquired a smattering of accomplishments quite sufficient to put her on a par with most of the Danesford belles. Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins never could contrive to enrol themselves among the best resident society of Danesford: many a struggle was made, expenses far from prudent were entered into, but in vain; for in the town where he had practised, his perform-

ances had made a lasting impression on his patients,—he was considered *physically* objectionable, and *apothecary's weight* kept him down far below the grade of society at which he aimed. There is nothing so aristocratic as the “*best set*” of residents in a watering-place; and Mrs. A. B. C. or D., though unknown beyond the precincts of the provincial town in which they take the lead, are *in* that town as consequential and exclusive as if admission to their *soirées* could alone render an individual presentable and unexceptionable in society.

Fanny Gubbins was, therefore, rarely visible, except at the public balls and the theatre of Danesford; and several seasons passed away without, as old Gubbins expressed it, “any good having come of their finery.” Fanny was twenty-nine, when, to the infinite delight of herself and her mother, at a very crowded public assembly, the master of the ceremonies walked up to them, presenting a very ordinary-looking middle-aged man, and, at the very moment when they were beginning to express by their looks their disapprobation

of the proffered partner, introduced him as Lord William Hanson. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the exultation of mother and daughter: innumerable were the “your lordships” uttered by the former; and the handsome Fanny exerted all her powers of pleasing, and at length succeeded in winning what the Right Honourable Lord William Hanson was pleased to call “*his heart*.”

This same *heart* had seen a deal of service; but it is not our business to develop the past amours of this “scion of a noble house,” particularly as the research could prove neither pleasurable nor profitable. At forty-five he led the blushing Fanny to the hymeneal altar: his own income was exceedingly small; but the moderate settlements of the alderman on his only child were accepted, as mines of wealth were expected at his death. The new-married pair spent some time on the Continent; and though Fanny was mortified at not being noticed by the Duke and Duchess of Canterton, still she was “*my lady*,” and that made amends for all!

Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins did not long survive their daughter's elevation; and when Lord and Lady William Hanson returned to Danesford, on account of the shattered health of his lordship, the apothecary and his lady were at peace in the chancel of the church. On the death of the alderman, it appeared that he had lived beyond his means; and though Lord William continued to enjoy the income settled upon him at his marriage, the anticipated large fortune which was to come to him at the death of his father-in-law never was realised. He was encumbered with debt and difficulties; his health had been undermined by the excesses of his youth; and after grumbling on for a few years, at a cottage residence near Danesford, he died exactly one year before the date of the commencement of our story, leaving Lady William a disconsolate widow, with one little boy, then seven years of age.

Master George, until his father's death, was a neglected child; during his mother's year of mourning he was a spoiled one. For the

first seven years of his life his parents were too dissipated to attend to him ; and, during the year which followed, Lady William having no other amusement, made him her pet and her plaything.

“ I cannot have you here, Georgy, just now,” said her ladyship. “ Biggin, take the child away ; and, Fane, go you and fetch my box of feathers, and my drawer of lace, and the dresses I wore before my mourning ; I want to see what I have got by me. George, don’t stand roaring there, but go to your nursery.”

“ I’ll not go with Biggin,” cried little Master George ; “ I will stay with my mamma.”

“ Do as you are bid, George, directly ; and don’t make such a noise, or the people in the street will hear you.”

“ For shame, Master Anson !” cried his *gouvernante* ; “ I wonders at you.”

“ If you don’t let me stay,” roared George, “ I’ll go to the window and cry louder, that the people may hear, and I’ll bring you all to shame ”

“Biggin, take him away,” said his mother.

“I won’t be taken,” shrieked the child.

“Go, dear, and I’ll drive to Danesford and buy you a pretty puzzle.”

“I won’t have a puzzle,” replied the boy ;
“I’ve puzzles enough, I’m sure, with my reading upstairs, without you’re buying puzzles for me. Don’t touch me, Betty. I’ll kick you ; — I won’t go.”

But Lady William repeated the order of dismissal, which Mrs. Biggin with much energy enforced ; and Master George Hanson was carried from the chamber in a paroxysm of passion.

Such ungovernable rages were not of rare occurrence with Master George. We wish to make the reader thoroughly acquainted with him, and must therefore tell what perhaps is little to his credit. His nurse, Mrs. Biggin, like all other nurses, was fond of a drop of tea and a bit of chat. A worthy old gossip of the neighbourhood once came in with her recently-born baby to while away an evening hour. The infant being fast asleep, and well wrapped

up, was laid upon a chair, and the two dames began their prattle. Once or twice did Master George interrupt them, with an entreaty to be permitted to do something highly indiscreet : he was commanded to be quiet ; and when his intrusion was repeated, Mrs. Biggin threatened him with chastisement. The little boy coloured up, and stamped with rage ; and then snatching the baby from the chair, he ran to the fire-place, declaring he would burn it if his nurse and her guest did not instantly comply with his wishes. It is needless to say that the baby was rescued, and the spoilt child was rendered by concession even more ungovernable.

CHAPTER II.

No wonder if the child hath err'd,
When none have told him wrong from right ;
If you neglect a favourite bird,
How can you blame its wayward flight ?

WHEN once again emancipated from the trammels of bombasin and crape, Lady William Hanson seemed resolved to make up for lost time. She wore roses beneath her bonnet, and feathers on the crown ; her eyebrows were more darkly pencilled, — her cheeks more deeply rouged ; and, after a few preliminary visits, and some ineffectual struggles from a refractory lady who had for years “ taken the lead,” she became undisputed queen of Danesford.

Let nobody suppose that we are bordering on the burlesque when we talk of her as a queen. The resident queen of a watering-

place, though she may, in dress and demeanour, remind you of Dollalolla, is, in her own territory, a personage of real and tangible importance ; and may possibly be quite as grand, and quite as influential, as many a petty potentate.

Her ladyship had now been two years a widow ; for the last twelvemonth her time had been wasted in dissipation, and Master George, left to the misdirection of servants, had become an intolerable nuisance. She now inhabited furnished apartments in the town of Danesford, and there we are now to seek her in her well-lighted drawing-room.

But the queen of Danesford had not as yet appeared in her audience-chamber. Mrs. Fane was still busily employed in giving the last finish to the regal toilet ; the servants, having lighted the apartments, had descended to the hall, or rather passage (for a Danesford lodging-house boasted of but small accommodation between the street-door and the foot of the staircase) ; and Master George, now a fine handsome boy of nine years old, was in

undisputed possession. “Row-de-dow, row-de-dow, row-de-dowdy-dow!” roared the young gentleman, marching about the room with an old cocked-hat upon his head—once the property of his late right honourable father,—in which was stuck an ostrich feather, *moulted* from the wardrobe of the widow; his pinafore, having been reversed, and hanging behind, was intended to represent a long-tailed coat; round his waist was his mother’s best silk scarf, doing duty as a military sash; his upper lip was inked, in humble imitation of a captain of dragoons who had recently cheered the Danesford parties by his presence; and from his neck was suspended a small-sized plated waiter, which he had found in the drawing-room, and which he vigorously beat with two large silver spoons, pilfered from the supper-table. His little face was flushed with excitement as he stamped about the rooms; and still the cry was “Row-de-dow, row-de-dow, row-de-dow, de-dow!”

But a change came o’er the spirit of his dream; — his martial ardour took a nobler

flight; — the spoons and waiter were thrown down, and, brandishing the hearth-brush, on which an unfinished square of worsted work was fastened as a flag, the drummer-boy was self-promoted to an ensign, and marched about waving his banner, and shouting “ Hurra ! hurra ! hurra ! ”

Suddenly there came a crash which resounded through the house, mingled with the shrieks of the now prostrate hero ! A crash in the habitation of her ladyship was by no means an uncommon occurrence ; nor were the howls of her heir-apparent at all likely to astonish her servants, or her immediate neighbours. But no former crash had equalled this,—never had George so unequivocally shouted with a voice of terror : every heart in the establishment palpitated ; and Lady William, starting from her dressing-table, clasped her hands, exclaiming, “ What *has* the boy done now ! ”

There was a rush towards the battle-field ; but Mrs. Biggin was the first who reached the prostrate, and, alas ! bleeding boy. By

the time she had raised him from the ground, every member of the court, including her majesty, stood around him ; and giving one energetic howl, louder than any that preceded it, he ran and buried his bloody forehead in the new white satin dress of his hitherto indulgent mother.

When it was ascertained that Master George was not only *alive* but *kicking*, the cause of the crash was very soon discovered. His banner had dislodged from the ceiling a glass chandelier of six branches, hired for the occasion ; and it was most fortunate that, in its fall, it had only slightly grazed the forehead of the offender.

“ Oh, the powers ! ” cried Mrs. Biggin, “ Master George’s head is a-bleeding.”

“ It serves him right,” cried Lady William ; “ look at my chandelier ! I hired it for the night, and must now pay its value ! ”

“ My carpet, if you please, my lady ! ” said Mr. Tinkle, who let the lodgings, and had been called forth from the recesses of his shop by the commotion ; “ my carpet is utterly destroyed ! ”

At that moment a thundering double rap was heard at the door, and several guests were in succession announced.

The one man-servant, assisted by the hired waiter, was busy gathering up the broken glass, and judiciously disposing candlesticks to make amends for the defalcation of the much-admired chandelier. The cook, with a white basin, soap, and a towel, was obliterating from the carpet the stains which had discomposed Mr. Tinkle; while Lady William, endeavouring to hide the marks of blood upon her dress, desired Master George to be carried to his chamber, and instantly to be put to bed.

Kicking, sprawling, and vociferating, the poor spoilt boy resisted the unwonted severity of those around him; but at length he was borne from the drawing-room, and the sound of his lamentations gradually died away.

To the temper of woman the fall of china is proverbially a trial; and no less so is the fall of a cut-glass chandelier, especially when we have hired it for fifteen shillings for the night, and, on account of its dilapidation, are called

upon to pay as many pounds. But not less grievous than the destruction of old china and cut-glass, is the stain which prematurely sullies the lustre of white satin! Master George received, on that eventful night, no kiss from his mamma; and, ere she placed her right honourable head upon her pillow, she had mentally resolved to set forth the following morning in quest of a school, where he might be taught better manners.

CHAPTER III.

Look at his grey hair,
Look at his wrinkled brow ;
And think he once was young, and fair,
And full of hope, as thou !
Tell him that joy is nigh,
That bright the future seems ;
And thou wilt hear the old man sigh
At thought of human schemes !

LET not the reader close our book under the impression that it will prove a mere nursery story,—a register of petty mischiefs, and the pains and penalties which are their consequences. We have an eventful tale to tell ; but, in order to develope it properly, we conceive we cannot do better than begin *at the beginning*. Those who are hereafter interested in our events may then be able to trace them to their causes ; and, though we tell a true story, (the real blended with the imaginary,)

we trust, should any think it worth while to seek a moral in our pages, they will not fail to find one.

There are some few villages, situated almost within hearing of the busy hum of large and populous cities, and yet so beautifully tranquil and secluded, that, as you pace their unfrequented pathways, and gaze upon their humble cottages, you cannot but imagine yourself a hundred miles from the haunts of fashion, business, or depravity. Such a village was Mapleton. It consisted of a few straggling cottages, irregularly built along the road: above it the hill rose abruptly, well wooded and clothed with verdure; and, a small distance below, you beheld the depth of the valley, where a clear swift stream ran over a pebbly bed, now distinctly visible, and now shadowed by the willow-trees that grew upon its banks, bending over as if to gaze upon the reflection of their own green and graceful branches. The cottages were all much alike, — neat, clean, and comfortable; each with its little plot of garden, gay in summer-time with roses,

hollyhocks, and sunflowers. But there was not one that soared above the others with an affectation of gentility: there were no sash-windows,—no green rails,—no brass-plate announcing the name of an apothecary,—and, stranger still, there was no shop. The distance from Danesford to Mapleton was only two miles; therefore, neither doctor nor dealer could hope to prosper at the latter. But on the rising ground that we have mentioned stood the old church, its tower garlanded with ivy; and near the porch grew a venerable yew-tree, spreading its massive arms over the few grave-stones on which were inscribed the simple annals of the poor. Close to the church-yard there was a small white gate, which opened into a pretty garden belonging to the rectory-house,—a very old and unpretending building, which could not be seen at any distance; it being only two stories high, and the walls entirely covered with ivy, fruit-trees, and flowering creepers.

From about midway up the hill, the garden sloped down to the road, from which it was

screened by a double row of chestnut-trees; and between them there was a path which, in the hottest day in summer, was cool and shaded. At the top of the garden there was a large cheerful summer-house; and immediately before it, in the centre of a little verdant lawn, there was a stone basin, about four feet deep, full to the very brim of the purest coldest water, being constantly supplied from a fountain which gushed from the hill above; and its perpetual overflow was carried off by a subterranean channel to the rivulet which watered the valley. This stone basin was guarded by an oval covering, made of strong green wire; and as the rector of Mapleton kept a school, and had two young children of his own, this precaution was by no means unnecessary.

There never lived a kinder-hearted man than the Reverend Mr. Leslie; but never was there one more unfit to be a schoolmaster. He was the mildest, the gentlest, the most amiable of beings; ignorant of the ways of the world, and blind to the failings of others. Now, a schoolmaster should certainly be mild,

gentle, and amiable; but the mildness should on proper occasions be clothed in a frown, — and the gentleness should wield the rod when actually necessary. He should be ever on the watch, seeing with half an eye the faults and follies of those who are sent to him to profit by his vigilance; and of the ways of the world he should at least have gained knowledge sufficient to guard them from the perils and temptations which, in those crooked paths, too surely will beset them.

Mr. Leslie's activity of mind had subsided into stagnation; his spirit had been early broken; and though as a private country clergyman he might have been admired for his meekness, patience, and resignation; in his public capacity,—as one who had undertaken to be the preceptor of youth,—he was perhaps justly censured for bodily languor and apparent mental imbecility. Brought up at a public school, he had formed an intimate friendship with a young man much above him in rank and station. With the portionless youngest sister of his friend he had fallen

in love; his addresses were not repulsed: on the contrary, his friend expressed his readiness to sanction the union as soon as he was sufficiently independent to claim a wife; and the girl herself, acknowledging that the attachment was mutual, formed an engagement with the young unbeneficed clergyman.

Years passed away, and still young Leslie was a curate: but his Katherine was constant; and, though her relatives censured the apparently hopeless engagement, they still met daily, and fondly talked of happy days to come; but they came not. Leslie was depressed and miserable; and though his fair companion assumed an air of cheerfulness, and tried to raise his spirits, the bloom of her youth passed from her; and he attained the age of forty, and she was thirty-seven, before he was able to announce to her family any favourable change in his circumstances and prospects. He then became rector of the little village of Mapleton; and determined to add to the small stipend, by the establishment of a boys' school. And how happy were Mr. and Mrs. Leslie

in their pretty but humble dwelling! — how happy in the enjoyment of each other's society, after a mortifying and almost hopeless engagement of twenty years! How happy! but, alas! for how brief a period! In the second year of their marriage poor Katherine Leslie died in giving birth to her second child; and from that moment he became an inactive, spiritless, heart-broken man.

At the time of the commencement of our story he had been for seven years a widower: his eldest daughter, Kate, was eight years old; and, child as she was, fair, gay, and volatile, she could already assume an air of matronly importance, as she affected to take care of her sister Fanny, who was but one year younger.

The boys, four-and-twenty in number, were at play in a field which adjoined the garden, under the superintendence of the usher; and in the summer-house sat Mr. Leslie, poring over a large book, while Katherine and Fanny sat near him busily employed,—the elder with a spelling-book, the younger with a doll. Car-

riage-wheels were heard approaching rapidly through the village; there was a violent peal on the bell at the gate; and then, after a few moments' delay, a servant crossed the garden to inform Mr. Leslie that Lady William Hanson was in the parlour with her little boy, and requested to speak with him directly.

It is unfortunate that Master George should always be introduced upon the stage in an unbecoming attitude; his mouth wide open to emit complaints, and his little features distorted with passion. We have never yet met with him in a tranquil and pacific humour; such humours indeed were of rare occurrence: to ensure such a blessing, it was absolutely necessary to let the young gentleman have his own way; and his way, young as he was, being always a mischievous one, he had already wearied the patience, not only of his own maid of honour, Mrs. Biggin, but also of his lady-mother and Mrs. Fane. He was a remarkably handsome boy, his limbs stout and well-formed, his skin clear, his cheeks rosy, his hazel eyes large and brilliant, and

his brown hair curling luxuriantly round his high white forehead. He had naturally a good disposition, warm affections, and kind feelings; but indulgence had already made him wilful, selfish, and arrogant.

“Go away, ugly old man,” cried he, as Mr. Leslie approached her ladyship; “go away, I say; I will go home with my mamma.”

“Mr. Leslie,” said Lady William, “you perceive I bring you a very refractory pupil; but I trust your skill and experience will speedily correct him.”

Mr. Leslie was very tall, very thin, and very bald: he was of course dressed in black, and his habiliments on week-days were none of the newest: his knee-breeches were loose, and tied with ribbon in long bows that hung down what was nominally the calf of his leg; his black silk stockings were of the very coarsest texture; and his thick square-toed shoes came up high on the instep. He had a habit—not an uncommon one, we believe—of pushing up his spectacles on his forehead when he wished to see people distinctly: when

perusing his book, they were invariably on his nose; but when he wished to interrogate a pupil, or inspect a visitor, he pushed them up, as if, instead of aiding, they impeded his sight; and, clasping his two hands behind his back, he opened his light grey eyes very wide, and stared at the object before him. He was exceedingly nervous, and generally silent; the sound of his own voice seemed to startle him. When circumstances roused him so far as to make him undertake the formation of a sentence, his courage failed him before he got half through it, or a misgiving came over him that he should not express himself clearly. To a stranger, his peculiarities were ludicrous; but to the very few who knew him well, and remembered what he once had been, it was melancholy to observe the nervous want of reliance on his own powers, the absence of mind, and the utter incapability of feeling interested about persons present and immediate occurrences. This arose from the prostration of a once sanguine mind, and a gloomy habit of brooding over past visions of happiness, all

of which had ended in disappointment. The best years of his life had been wasted in the sickness of the heart which is proverbially the result of "*hope deferred*;" and when at length a blameless and rational enjoyment of life, shared with the long-tried and dearly-loved companion of his early choice, seemed within his grasp, he found himself a widower, alone in the world, possessed indeed of a moderate competence, but deprived of her for whose sake he had so long desired it, and so exulted when it was obtained.

These are severe trials to the intellect of a man who lives in retirement. A worldly man would have felt them less; but to the worldly man they would never have happened: for the adverse circumstances which seemed to oppose an insurmountable barrier between him and his *first* love, would have driven him, *nominally* broken-hearted, back to the pursuits or the dissipations of society, where a second attachment would in all probability have obliterated the first; or, at all events, occupation,

and what is called pleasure, would have worn away the acuteness of his regret, and prevented his becoming in reality an oddity, and even now and then incurring the imputation of being *cracked*.

With his spectacles perched astride on the summit of his bald head, Mr. Leslie approached his intended pupil with the intention of trying the soothing system; a system from which he rarely deviated.

“My dear young gentleman,” said he, holding out his hand, “never give way to irritability.”

“Get away, ugly old man,” exclaimed George again, aiming a kick at the shins of the preceptor, who retreated in dismay.

“For shame, George!” said Lady William; “I hope Mr. Leslie has got a very large rod for naughty boys.”

“Nay,” said Mr. Leslie, “the use of the rod I reckon a custom more honoured in the breach, — I mean — hem! — I never flog the boys.”

“Never!” exclaimed her ladyship, whilst George for the first time ceased to sob, and ventured to cast a glance at the divine.

“Never, my lady,” he replied; “I have not nerve: the act of flagel—that is, if flogging is unavoidable, I leave it to the usher.”

“I consider discipline necessary,” said Lady William Hanson; “but if naughtiness be corrected, I care not by whom. George, Mr. Leslie will allow you to go and look at his garden, while he and I talk the business over.”

The owner of the garden of course readily assented; and George, only too happy to escape from so dull a controversy, ran through a door which opened to the lawn.

“And now, sir,” said Lady William, “it is desirable that we should thoroughly understand each other.”

“Of course, madam.”

“The boy has been spoilt at home,” said her ladyship.

“Cruel to spoil—” began Leslie in reply.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Lady Wil-

ham, "but I do not expect you to comment on my conduct: I ask you to teach my child."

"And I will conscientiously discharge——"

"No doubt," interrupted her ladyship; "but you will understand that you are not to interfere with his religion and morals."

"My lady!" exclaimed the preceptor in amazement.

"No, no," she continued, "I know very well you country parsons have particular notions; but I must have no puritanical ideas, no cant, nothing methodistical inculcated."

"I am an orthodox member of the church of England."

"No doubt," said her ladyship; "but my child must come home to me on Saturday, and spend his Sundays at home; and, in fact, I wish you not to interfere."

"I'm sure I honour any parent who feels it to be a paramount duty——"

"Sir!" said Lady William, looking at him through her glass.

"Who attends to her child's best interests," continued Mr. Leslie, dropping his voice, and

also his spectacles, which were replaced upon his nose in the agitation of the moment. "I honour you, my lady, for your parental anxiety."

"George must come to me every Saturday," said Lady William, "to have his dancing-lessons; I cannot trust essentials to any one but myself."

"And he will remain the Sundays with your ladyship?" inquired Mr. Leslie.

"Certainly."

"Then his collects, his catechism, and his attendance at divine worship——"

"Good morning, Mr. Leslie," said her ladyship rising; "I never discuss serious subjects on ordinary occasions; I consider it almost profane to do so."

"You are entrusting to me the temporal and spiritual guardianship of your only child; it is surely no ordinary occasion," said Mr. Leslie, roused for a moment from his customary apathy.

"You are no methodist, I trust, sir?"

"None, madam; unless, indeed, you reckon every religious man a methodist."

“No, no, all very proper, very right indeed; the clergy should be strict, and schoolmasters, in particular: but as George is to be a gentleman——”

“Madam?”

“I mean as George is to be of no profession, I wish him not to be infected with notions inconsistent with the bias of his family.”

“As your son, my lady, will visit you once a week, you will have an opportunity of judging whether undue interference has——”

“True, sir,” interrupted her ladyship, who had become rather weary of the discussion; “you will therefore remember that his dancing will be attended to at home, and—and his religion, and that sort of thing; in other matters, I trust your discipline will be strict.”

“Not injudiciously lax, I hope,” said Mr. Leslie; “but one who knows by experience how rarely sunshine enlivens manhood and age, must be reluctant to throw one unnecessary shadow over the thoughtless joyous path of infancy and youth.” He spoke with deep feeling, which accounts for the unwonted

coherence of his sentence ; and, once more pushing up his spectacles to the summit of his forehead, he wiped away a tear.

Never had Lady William Hanson felt so thoroughly out of her element : she thought, and not without some reason, that Mr. Leslie was a very eccentric man ; rang for her carriage, and inquired for her son, who appeared grasping with both hands an immense nosegay which he had gathered from poor Kate Leslie's own garden, in spite of her earnest entreaties and bitter tears. The spoiled child left her bemoaning over her rifled flower-beds, and, entering the carriage with his mother, he left the Rectory of Mapleton ; to which, however, he was doomed to return on the following Monday, with his little trunk, a knife and fork, and a silver spoon.

CHAPTER IV.

She fumes and she frets, she examines and mends,
And she orders about her and superintends.

MR. LESLIE was fortunate in having two most exemplary and useful persons in his little establishment; a tutor whose plain good sense and active habits made amends for his own languor and absence of mind; and a respectable elderly woman, who took the entire charge of his two daughters.

Mr. Ibbotson, the tutor, was the son of a very respectable bookseller in Danesford: he had been the pupil of Mr. Leslie's predecessor, and under his auspices had acquired, not only "a *little* knowledge," which is "a dangerous thing," but an imperfect cognisance of a great deal of learning, which is much more dangerous. He had just an inkling of all the arts,

and all the sciences, and all particularly well-known historical facts. He knew nothing—in-
deed, could not be expected to know anything—
of society; and, when accidentally thrown among
those who were not acquainted with his pe-
culiarities, his unsolicited explanations of sub-
jects which were never expected to be ex-
plained, were, if not taken in a ludicrous light,
exceedingly embarrassing to persons of limited
information. Mr. Leslie's academy was merely
a preparatory one, and Mr. Ibbotson was fully
competent to instruct the very young gentle-
men who were in the habit of attending it.

Mrs. Podd, the housekeeper, was just the
very best woman in the world; not the best
corporeally constructed, certainly, for she was
exceedingly small, and had one leg shorter
than the other: but there was no deformity
about her heart. Nobody knew how old she
was, for she did not like to be interrogated on
the subject; everybody thought she must be
very old indeed, for none could call to mind a
period at which she had looked younger; but
still her activity was surprising, and her spirits

never seemed to flag. She was very fond of dress, and on Sundays always wore a showy gown, and a big bonnet with cherry-coloured ribbons. She was the presiding genius of Mapleton Rectory; nothing was well done unless she did it. Not that the diminutive and lame housekeeper was unmercifully driven to exertions beyond her strength: on the contrary, she took it amiss if any other member of the household was employed on any errand of sufficient importance to claim her notice; and if she discovered that anybody had voluntarily done anything with the intention of saving her trouble, she invariably found it expedient to undo all that had been done, merely that she might be able to do it all over again. She never found fault if she could possibly avoid it: it was to her less painful, and far easier, to remedy with her own fingers the blunders of others, than to bring them into trouble by making a formal complaint.

“I must say, Mrs. Podd,” said Ibbotson, “I never saw the stairs of Mapleton Rectory in such a condition as this!”

“ I don’t deny it, but it ’s no fault of mine,” replied the housekeeper ; “ that new boy, George Hanson, would turn a palace topsy-turvy. There never was such a spoiled urchin.”

“ Nobody knows that better than myself,” said the tutor ; “ he is sent here to be taught forsooth, and at the same time correction is forbidden. His mother sends him from home because she can no longer tolerate his behaviour ; and yet we, to whose care she entrusts him, are prohibited from making him better !”

“ Patience, and he’ll mend,” replied Mrs. Podd.

“ Mend what !” exclaimed Ibbotson,—“ the articles he has broken since he entered the house ? it will consume all his pocket-money : or is it himself that he’s to mend ? past mending, I fear. It is perfectly well known that, in the education of their children, the parents of antient Rome maintained strict discipline, and—”

“ I beg your pardon, sir,” interrupted Mrs. Podd, “ I never can take an interest in those

old Romans; you know best how they managed their poor brats, of course. But they are no examples for us; and, as for Master Hanson, really when one considers he's a sort of a kind of a sprig of nobility——"

"I know not *that*; but this I know, there's no nobility in mischief."

"He'll get the better of that," said kind Mrs. Podd; "and how handsome he is!"

"Handsome is as handsome does."

"I ought to have known you would say so," replied she; "and it is presumption in me to argue with a scholar, but——"

"Nay, Mrs. Podd," said Ibbotson, "I have as little severity about me as yourself; but really Hanson is so ungovernable that——"

"Where are my dancing-shoes?" cried George, running towards the disputants; "mamma desired me to practise my steps, and somebody has taken away my pumps."

"Never mind them to-day," said the usher; "we'll do a bit of arithmetic instead."

"I hate 'rithmetics," cried George, "and I will have my pretty pumps."

“Don’t be angry, dear,” whispered Mrs. Podd; “I’ll go and look for them:” and away she went, while George followed her to the door, irreverently mimicking the irregularity of her steps, and feigning a short leg.

“Oh, fie!” said Ibbotson.

“Don’t oh fie me,” cried George, strutting back with both legs perfectly straight; “no oh fie, at all. Do you know my grandpapa’s a lord?”

“If your grandpapa be a lord, it the more behoves you to be a gentleman.”

“And that’s why I want to learn to dance,” said George.

“Well,” replied Ibbotson, “I never danced myself, but it is a practice of great antiquity. The Greeks danced, the Romans danced; Plutarch calls dancing a mute conversation; Aristotle says something about dancing too, but I don’t just remember what: no matter, though I never did dance myself, I can make allowances.”

“Oh bother!” cried George; “where are my pumps?”

“Here, pet,” exclaimed Mrs. Podd, with good-natured exultation; “here they are, and now I’ll help you to put them on;” and she suited the action to the word.

“And I’ll go into the play-ground,” said Ibbotson: “and be sure, Hanson, you know your repetition when I call you.”

Away went the usher; and George, having put on his dancing-shoes, began exhibiting his proficiency to Mrs. Podd, who was desired to hum a tune to facilitate his movements. This she did readily, for she never said ‘no’ to anybody if she could possibly help it; and loudly, though not very harmoniously, did she sing, while George capered round her. At length he exhausted the varieties of his *pas seul*, and requested Mrs. Podd to join him in a *pas de deux*: he would hear of no denial; and the good-natured old body, tucking up the tail of her gown through her pocket-hole, and continuing her song, utterly forgetful of her short leg, took hold of George by his two hands, and danced up the room, and down the room, and round the room, and this way, and that

way ; until, happening to face the door, she perceived Mr. Leslie gazing on her, with his spectacles pushed up to the very top of his head, and by his side stood the Right Honourable Lady William Hanson, with infinite difficulty smothering a laugh. Mrs. Podd suddenly stopped, said nothing, and hobbled out of the room as fast as her very ill-matched legs could carry her ; and George, uttering a shout of surprise, ran and embraced his mother.

“ Have you brought me anything good ? ” said he.

“ Plenty of *bonbons*, ” replied her ladyship ; “ and I am glad to find you have not forgotten your dancing, for I wish you to exhibit in public, though not exactly with the partner you had chosen. ”

Lady William soon informed Mr. Leslie and her delighted son, that her object in seeking the Rectory that day was to prepare the latter for a grand ball to be given by his dancing-master, Monsieur Bonvarlet, at the assembly-rooms of Danesford.

The celebrated Terpsichorean preceptor had

the honour of teaching steps to several schools ; and his assembled scholars, both masters and misses, were to exhibit on this eventful evening. The young gentlemen were all to be attired in a uniform : sky-blue jackets with silver sugar-loaf buttons, a white silk waistcoat embroidered with silver, white trousers, and a fanciful cap and feather. There was also a *regulation* dress for the young ladies. George was in an ecstasy ; his judicious mother had brought with her in the carriage his ball-dress to be tried on ; and though Mr. Leslie calmly notified that the bell which her ladyship heard ringing was a summons to the studies of the afternoon, she declared that George must have a half-holiday, and, without waiting for a reply, she added,

“ Pray, my good sir, leave us to try if these gay habiliments fit ; and if you will kindly send me that elderly lady, whose dance I interrupted, to assist George at his toilet, you will add to the obligation.”

Mr. Leslie hesitated for a moment, as if conscious that it was his duty to point out to

a vain and frivolous mother the impropriety of distracting the mind of a child so recently committed to his care, and of whose ignorance, idleness, and insubordination she had so loudly complained. But he felt unequal to the task, and, replacing his spectacles on his nose, he bowed and quitted the room.

Mrs. Podd soon made her appearance, hobbling in, and making a *pat-pat* noise on the floor with the high shoe that was intended to make her short leg in some degree act as fellow to the long one. The recollection of having been detected in the performance of her *pas de deux* with young Hanson had flushed her countenance; and to hide that, and end as soon as possible the awkwardness that she felt, she went instantly down on her knees, and busily employed herself in the arrangement of her late partner's new dress.

When her task was finished, George proudly strutted up and down the parlour to the infinite delight of his mother: Mrs. Podd was loud in the expression of her admiration, and went *pat-pat* backwards and forwards, and

round the little beau, to examine his costume.

Suddenly Master George darted to the door, and merely exclaiming, "Mamma, I'll be back in a minute," he ran off, calling for somebody at the very highest pitch of his voice.

"Where upon earth is the boy gone to!" exclaimed Lady William; "I must take back his dress with me to have some alterations made, and I cannot possibly wait five minutes longer."

"Oh, my lady," said the ever bland Mrs. Podd, "boys will be boys; and Master Hanson has only run away to show his fine clothes: very natural."

"Good gracious!" replied the anxious mother; "gone where? to show them to whom? not to the boys in the dirty school-room, I trust."

"No, not there I think," answered the housekeeper; "not that the school-room is dirty, I take care of that; but, depend on it, Master Hanson is gone to exhibit himself to the young ladies."

“ Young ladies !” said Lady William.

“ Yes, my lady ; you never saw them, perhaps ?—the sweetest children, our Kate and Fanny.”

“ And who, in the name of patience, my good woman, may our Kate and Fanny be ?”

“ Dear me, my lady !” exclaimed Podd, “ did you never see them ? oh ! then it’s a pleasure to come : the two Miss Leslie, my lady ; I’ll go and fetch them.” And away she went with her usual quick, though irregular motion ; and the customary *pat-pat* was heard in the passage, and on the stairs, long after she was out of sight.

Lady William seemed doomed to await the pleasure of her son ; she therefore seated herself, trusting that Mrs. Podd would soon discover him, and bring him back. Several minutes elapsed, and no one came near her, when at last she heard somebody open a window of an upper chamber ; and a glass door, which led from the parlour to the garden, not being closed, she could hear Mrs. Podd calling very loudly, “ Master Hanson, where are you ?

come in directly, sir. Miss Kate, Miss Fanny, I'll be out in a minute if you don't come in."

The voice of a child crying loudly for help was then heard; there was a hurried noise in the room overhead, *pat-pat-pat* more unequal and quick than usual on the stairs and through the passage; and then the house-keeper, pale as a spectre, glided into the parlour, crossed it, and instantly disappeared into the garden. It was evident that something very unusual had occurred; and Lady William, after listening in perplexity to various confused noises, rang the bell.

The mystery was soon explained: Mrs. Podd re-entered from the lawn, bearing in her arms Master George, who, wet to the skin from head to foot, was roaring as loud as he could bawl, partly with anger, and partly with fright. George had, as Mrs. Podd wisely conjectured, gone in quest of Kate and Fanny, but especially the former, who was his especial favourite; and knowing that they were likely to be playing in the summer-house, thither he had

bent his steps. Many were their exclamations of astonishment and delight on seeing his new dress; and George, elated by their admiration, began to exhibit on the lawn his proficiency in the art of dancing, now gliding to the right, and then to the left,—shuffling forwards to the door of the summer-house, and then receding in Monsieur Bonvarlet's most approved style. But, alas! like many older people, who, though they ought to know better, neglect to consider whither they are going, the elated exhibitor receded too far, made a false step, and fell backwards head-over-heels into the little reservoir of water, which, though generally covered with a green wire fence to prevent the possibility of such accidents, had this day been opened by the gardener, who had been removing weeds from the interior, and had left the spot for a few minutes. George's situation was one of real peril; and as the two little spectators who witnessed with terror this tragical *finale* to his animated *ballet* could do nothing but cry, he might briefly have ended his ca-

reer, had not Mrs. Podd, alarmed by the screams of the children, reached the spot in time to flump down in a sitting posture on the edge of the basin, with her unfortunate legs dangling in the water; and leaning forward, she made a successful grasp at the collar of George's blue jacket, extricated him from his danger, and then withdrawing her legs from their very cold immersion, and regaining the perpendicular,—that is, as much as she was ever known to do so,—she went *pat-pat* over the gravel-walk, and, followed by the still terrified girls, made her appearance before Lady William.

Her ladyship was an experienced fainter, and had the gift of screaming on all occasions equal to any lady of fashion or heroine of romance. Shrill was her outcry at the sudden appearance of the semi-saturated old woman and her really half-drowned burthen; and had it not been for her rouge, she would have changed colour as entirely as her poor child's sky-blue jacket. Kind Mrs. Podd always had her wits about her: she untied a silk hand-

kerchief from the neck of the struggling boy, ran to Lady William, who had sunk fainting on a chair, and wringing it over her, drenched her face and parts of her lilac pelisse with the water of which it was full; she then rushed to the bell and rang it violently, and, without uttering one word, limped out of the room, and *pat-patted* up stairs with a velocity hitherto unparalleled. The little girls ran to their father, and by their incoherent account gave him an idea that something serious had occurred. He soon reached the parlour, where Lady William, having recovered from her syncope, was giving vent to alternate rage and terror. Before Mr. Leslie could utter a word, she insisted upon being taken to her child; and when the good man with truth declared that he had supposed he was with her ladyship, she replied that she would seek him herself, and, followed at a respectful distance by the bewildered schoolmaster, she mounted the stairs, and ran successively into every bedchamber on the first floor: but her search was vain, and loudly calling on her son,

she entreated him to tell her where he was. She then heard the shrill but cheerful voice of Mrs. Podd, who cried, "Here we are, my lady, snug and comfortable." Following the sound, her ladyship passed through a narrow whitewashed passage which led to the servants' apartments, and entering the humble one which was appropriated to the use of the housekeeper, she found that venerable dame cuddled up in bed between the blankets, with her own son and heir,--both their heads upon one pillow, and both seeming to enjoy the fun of the remedy now that the actual danger was at an end.

CHAPTER V.

I have dreamt of fairy favours,
Of the gold that lies conceal'd,
Where no outward mark betrays it,
In the poor man's sterile field.
Is not INDUSTRY the fairy
Who can call these favours forth,
Who can raise a golden harvest
From the bosom of the earth ?

THANKS to Mrs. Podd's precautionary measures, George caught no cold ; and the next day his judicious mother sent her carriage for him, briefly informing Mr. Leslie in a note that she intended keeping him at home until Monsieur Bonvarlet's ball was over. The ball was fixed for that day fortnight ; and there were to be morning rehearsals at the dancing-school, and generally one every evening at the house of the parents of one of the pupils ; and there were to be two dress rehearsals at the

rooms: in fact, for fourteen days dancing was to be uppermost in Master George's mind.

In the days of mourning and monotony he had been his mother's pet and plaything: when weeds were to be thrown aside, he with the weeds had been discarded, and had been sent from home when his society was no longer necessary, and his presence interfered with her projects of gaiety and dissipation. And now again, after a brief stay with persons who were beginning to gain a salutary influence over him, she snatched him from their guidance, and took him home, merely because it would gratify her own vanity to dress him up like a little mountebank, and hear him praised as one of Monsieur Bonvarlet's best pupils.

Mr. Leslie had in vain assured her that the future bias of his mind and temper towards good or evil depended in a great measure on the regularity with which his education was pursued. We now see him abandoned to the influence of one of those abominations, a dancing-master's exhibition ball! His dress was canvassed as a matter of paramount import-

ance ; there were morning practisings and evening rehearsals, late hours, cake and wine, and the never-failing voice of flattery ! Lady William Hanson smiled upon these frivolous pursuits, and talked of emulation ! — what have not such parents to answer for !

We are by no means to be numbered among those wise or strict personages who ridicule dancing as a folly, or condemn it as a fault. We have heard people, by no means notorious for the wisdom of their proceedings, utter a contemptuous tirade against dancing, concluding with the rather stale observation, “ What would you think if you went into a room with your ears stopped, and saw the men and women hopping about ? ”

By stopping our ears, we should become deaf to the music, which is not only a necessary adjunct to the art of dancing, but is actually that which inspires it. The pleasure derived from dancing arises from movements of the body and limbs to the measure of a melody ; and we have generally observed that the man who has uttered the above oft-repeated com-

mon-place has been one whose ear did not enable him to distinguish one tune from another.

We do not object to a mother's anxiety that her son should learn to dance: we quarrel not with the cook who serves a dish of flummery to our table; if the flummery be good, we should be sorry to be without it: but we must have the solids first; the flummery must be an auxiliary to the dinner, not the dinner itself. Dancing is good garnish to education; but we must neither live upon dancing, nor upon flummery. Master George skipped about Monsieur Bonvarlet's academy, and skipped his lessons at Mapleton, until, having overheated himself and kept late hours, he was laid up with a violent attack of scarlet fever; and in addition to the fortnight devoted to folly by his mother, he was absent from school for three months, on account of his very dangerous illness, and the weakness which was its result.

When he did return to Mapleton, though considerably grown, he was so pale and thin

that Mrs. Podd did not at first recognise him ; but when she did, she snatched him to her arms and embraced him tenderly, forgetting that, having been engaged in making walnut catsup, her hands were stained with the juice of the fruit.

“ Oh, don't,—you 're so dirty !” cried George.

“ No, no ; or if I am, it's all clean dirt,” replied the good woman. “ But come to me, Master George, when I'm making the preserves, and you'll not complain of my hands being stained with raspberries ;” and as an earnest of what she might be expected to do when summer fruits were ripe, she gave him a spoonful of jam from the stores of the preceding year, little suspecting how often he had feloniously helped himself when her back was turned.

George loved jam, and began also to love Mrs. Podd. She was very kind to him ; and the poor invalid having worn out his mother's patience, felt and appreciated the kindness of the old housekeeper, and enjoyed the society of his little playfellows, Kate and Fanny,

with whom he was permitted to associate whilst he was too weak to join the other boys in the play-ground.

Delicate health was now an additional obstacle to George Hanson's progress in the path of knowledge. He was a quick, clever boy, remembering in a surprising manner things that were never intended to be impressed upon his mind. His mother had several times taken him to the Danesford theatre; and of the plays and the scenes, and the dresses of the actors, he had a remarkably distinct recollection. He would also often pick up a book accidentally thrown in his way, and would sit for hours poring over it, entirely engrossed by the story, and long afterwards quoting its details: but give him a lesson to learn, and his faculties appeared numbed; he would plod at it with a miserable blank face for a long time, and then, when interrogated, would not know three words. On these occasions he looked like a fool, though he was none. With such a boy it is late at ten years of age to begin a system of education. Such things

may be done by persons of powers adequate to the task ; but, with the best intentions in the world, Mr. Leslie was not the man to do them. George had been irregularly treated : now a *pet*, and now a *pest* ; encouraged one day to do wrong, and punished the next for not doing right ; idle in a dull week, because his mother, having no engagements, wanted him to amuse her ; and then left to learn a task under the superintendence of Mrs. Biggin, because she had parties to go to, or company to receive, and could not be bored with his noise. A judicious union of undeviating firmness and kindness might still have done much for him ; but the schoolmaster thus gifted is one in a thousand, and Mr. Leslie, with all his good qualities, was not *that one*.

But ignorance, though bad in itself, was not the worst result of Lady William Hanson's selfish and injudicious treatment of her child. The poor little fellow's word was never to be relied upon ; and nothing that was tempting was safe if left within his reach. Such are the inevitable fruits of idleness.

CHAPTER VI.

Though *childhood*, when tutored by art, prematurely
May imitate man in look, action, and tone,
Life's summer will not be forestall'd, and too surely
The charm of life's spring-time for ever is gone !

HOWEVER wild and ungovernable boyhood may be, we are naturally inclined to linger over these petty details of faults and follies, rather than to hurry onwards to the period when it may be our task to trace the reckless career of youth, or the vices and the sufferings of manhood. Besides, in dwelling on George's irregularities, we point rather to the foolish indiscretion of the mother than to its result, the errors of the child ; and we thus hold up a weak, vain woman as a warning to parents, because in the individual instance before us we trace to edu-

cation the events of George Hanson's future life ; and because generally we affirm, that no boy so brought up, if he have quick feelings and strong passions, can, as it is termed, "*turn out well.*" Is it not natural that the selfishness of the parent should be engrafted on the child ? And what are most of the errors of manhood but self-gratification, blind and deaf to the feelings and remonstrances of others ?

George was what is called by persons who glance but at the surface of character, a most affectionate child. He had great warmth of feeling, and always acted upon the impulse of the moment ; he therefore quickly formed attachments to those who indulged him. He would readily do for them any good-natured act which promoted their gratification, and which at the same time gave himself no trouble : but, to accommodate them, he would not resign the most trifling anticipated amusement ; and even a gentle suggestion that it might be postponed to a more convenient season would throw him into a paroxysm of rage.

As he grew older, his personal appearance

greatly improved, and the charm of his graceful figure and intelligent countenance was aided by an earnest warmth of manner quite irresistible with those he wished to please ; and all others he treated with indifference, if not with contempt.

Children brought up *irregularly* cannot be expected to become attached to their parents. The over-indulgence of one week is neutralised by the neglect or undue severity of the next ; and, indeed, the injustice will be remembered long after the endearments are forgotten. The child who is uniformly treated as it deserves, rewarded for good conduct, and corrected for idleness or mischief, is quite aware that those who are in authority over it are merely doing their duty : or, at all events, in a very few years it gains sufficient knowledge of right and wrong to judge whether or not it was *its own fault* when indulgence was withheld and punishment inflicted.

George loved home, for, like all boys, he loved idleness ; and never was there a more idle house than his mother's. But there was so little

method in her capricious indulgence of him when it suited her to have him with her, and so little justice in her neglect and indifference when she thought proper to send him away “because he was too much for her,” that the poor boy would have been blind indeed had he not perceived that when she sought him and when she shunned him, self-gratification was all she thought of. It was not thus that she could ever hope to win the affections of her child: she did not win them, but her example made George as selfish as herself.

At fifteen he was still an inmate of Mr. Leslie's *preparatory* school. Mr. Leslie had more than once conscientiously hinted that it was high time her ladyship should remove him to one of the public schools, or to a private tutor: but Lady William soon ascertained that a removal of this kind would entail a very considerable increase of expense; and as her income merely consisted of five hundred a-year, settled upon her by her father, when he and her mother were silly enough to be gratified at her marrying a lord, she was the last person

in the world likely to deny herself any indulgence, that she might give her only child superior advantages, or promote his future interests.

The income which she enjoyed was settled upon her boy ; and at the decease of an uncle of her late husband, his property, which was considerable, was settled upon the Duke of Canterton's younger children and their heirs : so that George was sure of enjoying eventually an adequate independence. When he was in his sixteenth year, his mother was attacked with a sudden and hopeless illness ; and then indeed, when it was too late, she earnestly desired to atone for past neglect, and to take some step to prevent her child's being thrown upon the world uninformed and unprotected, without steady principles, and without a real friend. Not knowing where else to seek one, she sent to Mapleton, entreating that Mr. Leslie would visit her without delay : and when a dying woman made it her last request that he would continue to give her boy the shelter of his roof, he was not the man who could utter

a denial. The selfish are always violent in the expression of their griefs; they are unaccustomed to suffering, and they peremptorily exact sympathy from others. George gave a brief vent to his distress, and was then exceedingly particular about his mourning; and having taken care that everybody should be miserable as long as he was so, he expected that everybody should be ready to contribute to his amusement as soon as he was ready to be amused.

And here again was a new excuse for idleness. Who could force the orphan lad from morning walks with those whose conversation pleased him, or from the evening perusal of such books as he thought proper to select from the circulating library at Danesford?—if selection it could be called, when the worst were devoured as eagerly as the best.

There were, of course, ample funds from which to repay Mr. Leslie for the board and lodging of the young gentleman, who had signified that it was his intention to employ the best masters in Danesford for all the acquirements and accomplishments which Mr. Leslie

and his assistant did not profess to teach. Mr. Leslie warmly applauded him for the intention, and never once doubted that it would be realised. The worthy rector was now nearly eight years older than when we first introduced him to the reader; and if at forty-nine we found him utterly unfit to govern little boys of six or eight years old, it may be presumed that at fifty-seven he would himself be easily ruled by a fine spirited youth of seventeen. George was called a parlour boarder: tuition in his case was not to be thought of. He had an apartment fitted up for his own exclusive use, and very soon insinuated a horse into the rector's stable, and half a dozen dogs into his yard.

Mr. Ibbotson, a mere lad when first he lectured this unwilling pupil, was now twenty-four; Mrs. Podd, who never had been known to look younger than when we first knew her, now looked much the same as ever; and though the tutor had long since ceased to exert even the semblance of control over George, the housekeeper still would go *pat-pat* after him, and scold him for not changing his stockings

when his feet were wet. In fact, though always his butt, she seemed to have more influence over him than any of the family, *with one exception*. That *one* was the fair Katherine, the eldest daughter of Mr. Leslie, who at sixteen was not only the rose of Mapleton, but the prettiest girl in the county.

Never had two orphan girls made better use of the few advantages which had been thrown in their way than Kate and Jane Leslie. We ought to have given the entire credit to the elder sister; for Jane, though only one year younger, was much more infantine in person, manner, and intellect, and had always looked up to her sister with the fond eyes of dependence, taking from her every action the hint how she ought to act herself.

Katherine, almost as soon as she could walk and talk, had felt the necessity of using her legs and her tongue in the service of her father, her little sister, and herself. There had never been a superabundance of domestics in the Rectory: if she wanted anything, she therefore early acquired the excellent habit of going and

fetching it. They could not recollect their mother — to their father and Mr. Ibbotson they were indebted for their education ; and as they learnt the Latin grammar with the younger boys, and Kate had an active mind that eagerly pursued any branch of knowledge of the elements of which she had been allowed to catch a glimpse, she—and, in a somewhat less degree, her sister—soon knew a good deal of a language with which most young ladies are unacquainted.

But Kate from the gravest studies would walk away to the kitchen or the store-closet, and, in defiance of the excellent and all-engrossing Podd, who thought that nothing could be done well unless she did it herself, she would superintend the dishes which her father was most fond of, and make with her own hands the pudding which she had heard George Hanson praise.

The two sisters were always well dressed : they were not without the very natural feminine anxiety to know the latest fashions for sleeves and bodies, and, living in the neigh-

bourhood of so populous a town as Danesford, information on such subjects was easily acquired. But everything that they wore was cut out and made by themselves; and though the materials were never costly, and the colours never glaring, no one could meet them without being struck with the elegance of their appearance. But their dress and demeanour were perfectly consistent with their father's means and station in society: they never could be surprised in a costume that would disgrace them in a fashionable promenade; yet meeting them in the retired fields and lanes about Mapleton, no one could accuse them of being overdressed.

We are aware that we are dwelling on trifles; but trifles alone can render us acquainted with beings so young and unpretending, who lived in total retirement. Instead of indulging in such homely, tranquil details, it will too soon be our lot to accompany one of them in her departure from this happy valley.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, what a beauteous thing is love ! how happy and how pure !

Thus springing up in two young hearts, from present ills secure,

Assuming friendship's name, it quite forgets that friends must sever,—

As if such friends through this cold world went hand in hand for ever !

A fountain in a lonely vale resembles such a dream :

Now nothing but the clear blue sky is 'mirror'd in the stream ;

Beside the valley's loveliest path its infancy is led ;

Its bank is lined with violets, with softest moss its bed.

But the stream must leave the lonely vale, the violets, and the moss,

And struggle on into the world, where restless billows toss ;

Its purity reflects no more the bright expanse above,

And the calmness of its course is lost—Oh ! is 't not so with love ?

ANOTHER year flew by ; and if George at eighteen called himself a man, Katherine at seventeen really was a very fine young woman. The admirable plan of employing masters at

Danesford for the acquirement of the very many branches of knowledge of which George was ignorant, had never yet been put in practice. Day after day, and week after week, the alarming *first step* was always postponed: and the longer we have thought about doing a thing, and the oftener we have on trivial excuses put it off, the more natural does it seem to go on thinking about it, and still to postpone the doing, until at last we persuade ourselves it is too late to do it at all. And this was the case with George, who had, during the two years which had elapsed since his mother's death, employed no masters, excepting the master of the *manège* at Danesford, and a musician to give him lessons on a new-invented flageolet,—which instrument he selected, in spite of its inveterate squeak, because he was told it was the easiest to play upon in the world.

“Kate,” cried he one morning, “Kate, where are you?—come down;” and he called louder, and threw pebbles at her casement to make his impatience the more apparent.

“What do you want?” said a sweet voice; and at the same moment the window opened, and the fairest and freshest of female faces looked down upon him.

“I want you, Kate: come and walk with me.”

“With pleasure. Jane, go and get ready.”

“Now, why can’t you do as you are bid, without calling Jane? She will be ages looking for her shawl and her bonnet; but you are always ready in a moment.”

Kate laughed, and disappeared from the window; and in three minutes she stood by his side on the lawn.

“There’s a dear good girl! Now take my arm.”

“And you won’t wait for Jane?”

“Certainly not,” he replied; and arm-in-arm they ran off towards the path which meandered by the side of the rivulet.

Precious moments are those when the boy and girl, who have been playmates all their days, first throw aside the sports of childhood, and first walk and talk together with somewhat

of the seriousness of riper years—with all the watchful attention of manhood on his part, and all the confiding affection of womanhood on hers, yet without a thought of love on either side, and without a dread of being accused of a flirtation !

Moments so pure and happy are brief indeed ! The stripling soon thinks himself a man, and whispers to his former playfellow the word which promises bliss, but which at once ends the unconscious simplicity with which she has been accustomed to seek him. The girl may well rely on the truth of one whom she has known from infancy, believing that she has seen in the boy the virtues whose maturity will adorn the man. But intercourse with the world too often brings out the dark shades of character, hitherto almost imperceptible ; while the glimmerings of better qualities, which have won her good opinion, become darkened, if not altogether extinguished.

But it is not only the premature assumption of manhood on the one side, nor feminine consciousness on the other, that ends the free

unfettered association of beings as young and beautiful as the pair who now sauntered beneath the willow-trees in the green valley of Mapleton. Old age, with its gossip, steps officiously forth to mar this brief season of enjoyment ; and seventeen cannot show a preference for sixteen, nor can sixteen wander alone with seventeen in any green valley for many weeks together, without suspicions being excited, inquiries instituted, and spies appointed ; and at the very time George Hanson was walking by the side of Kate Leslie, several persons, having watched their departure from the Rectory, were debating the probability of a match between the lord's son and the parson's pretty daughter.

As yet, however, no consciousness of such an imputation interfered with the unrestrained freedom of their most innocent intimacy ; and, having reached the shaded path, they wandered side by side, just as they would have done five years before, when weary of the hoop or the skipping-rope.

“ I should die of the dulness of Mapleton,

Kate," said he, "if it were not for a chat and a saunter now and then with you."

"The dulness!" cried Kate, stopping and looking up in his face with unaffected amazement; "Mapleton *dull*!"

"Yes, you child," replied George, laughing; "desperately dull sometimes."

"Well, I'm sure *I* never find it so."

"Oh, you are always busy; and when one has something to do, no place is dull, I suppose."

"And if *you* are idle, George, and find Mapleton dull, pray who is to blame?"

"I know what you mean, Miss Wisdom, but I can't help it: when you ask who is to blame, I declare I don't think it is myself."

"Indeed!"

"No; I've never been used to do anything but what I was forced to do; and, now that I'm too old and too big to be forced, I can't change my nature, and go and seek employment."

"Yes, you could, if you would only set about it saying to yourself, *I know it's right, and so I'll try.*"

“Well, when I come back, for your sake I *will* try.”

“Come back!—are you going away?”

“Yes; I’m going to stay a week at Danesford with some old friends of my poor mother.”

“I’m sorry for that;—but then you need not wait till you come back: you always talked of learning fine things from masters at Danesford; so you can begin at once.”

“Oh, no, Kate; the masters must come hither by-and-by: this is the gay season at Danesford; balls and parties every night, and the théâtre open too!—such fun!”

“Oh, how glad I shall be when you come back and tell me all about it!”

“I wish you could be there with me, Kate; I should enjoy it twice as much.”

“Should you indeed! Well, for once, I do wish I could see a play with you! I never was at a play, you know, George.”

“When I come back, I promise you you shall see one, Kate.”

“And Jane?”

“Yes, yes, to be sure.”

“And—and—my father will never go with us, and I don’t think we can go with you alone.—Oh, I know ! Podd must go with us !”

“Podd !” cried George, laughing ; “Podd in a private box !”

“Oh, George ! poor Podd will look very respectable.”

“So she will, Kate ; and, did she look the very reverse, she should go nevertheless for your sake. And here she comes to meet us, and scold us for being late at breakfast. Not a word about the play, Kate, till I settle it all with your father.—Well, dame, here we are ; and Miss Kate has been giving me a lesson.”

“A lesson !” exclaimed Podd, shaking her head.

“A botanical lesson,” replied George : “and now for a chase !” and, snatching from the worthy dame a bit of cambric which she had been hemming, he flourished it in the air, running towards the house, and looking back and laughing at her, as, half in sorrow, half in anger, she went *pat-pat* up the gravel-walk in vain pursuit.

The days of asking leave were gone by ; no permission was solicited, no refusal dreaded : so George packed up his trunk, ordered it to be sent to Danesford after him, and, mounting his horse, bade a gay adieu to Mr. Leslie and his tranquil family. His friends were gay people, who entered into all the dissipations of the place ; their house was naturally attractive to a youth of eighteen, educated as he had been : the fortnight named as the extent of his visit was doubled, and then again another fortnight was devoted to their society ; and it was not until after a lapse of six weeks that he returned to Mapleton, tired, haggard, worn-out, and irritable.

Kate was the first person whom he met as he entered the low and humble dwelling ; and though he addressed her with pleasure, he looked round with evident disgust.

“ I ’m delighted to see you, Kate ! ” said he :
“ and have you been vegetating here ever since we last met ? ”

“ Where should I be but at my home, George ? ”

“ True ; but I protest you are worthy of a better home.”

“ Don’t say that, George,—I should be wrong to let you say that : I can never be more happy.”

“ That is because you have known no other home.”

“ So much the better for me, George, if going elsewhere could make me dissatisfied.”

“ Oh, don’t preach ! I’ve had such a visit, — such fun ! I wish you had been with us !”

“ Do you, George ? I doubt *that* : I beg your pardon for saying so, but, had you missed—had you thought of me, or any of us, you would during the last six weeks have come over at least *once* to see us.”

“ I *sent* over, Kate.”

“ Yes, once, when you wanted the pointer puppy.”

“ Well, and of course heard you were all well.”

“ The man who came for the dog never made any inquiry.”

"How do you know?"

"Podd told me so."

"Podd's an old fool!"

"Oh, George, for shame!"

"Don't say 'for shame' to *me*, Miss Leslie!" said the youth, drawing up his fine form in anger.

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied Kate, colouring, and turning towards the house.

"Nay, Kate, don't go,—*I* beg *your* pardon," said George, following and taking her hand.

Kate tried to speak, but could only withdraw it in silence.

"Come, hang it! no nonsense. I did not mean what I said: but I can't bear being found fault with; and I'm not a boy now, you know."

"I shall not again forget it, Mr. Hanson."

"Mr. Hanson! That will never do: call me George now, and always, just as you did long ago; you will break my heart if you don't!" cried George, tears standing in his eyes. "Why, Kate, you were not wont to

be so cross ! you are vexed because I've not been near you for six weeks."

" *I*, sir ?—no, no !"

" Yes, yes, you are : but I could not help it ; the Somervilles always had some engagement for me. But I did not forget you : I often talked of you ; so often, indeed, that they used to laugh at me about you."

" About *me* !—Impossible !"

" Yes, and I don't wonder at it : they told me I raved about you ; and whenever I came down to breakfast, they asked me if I had been dreaming of my little wife."

" I'll tell my papa if you call me names."

" Pooh ! come, be friends ; I will have a kiss : a man may kiss his little wife, you know !" and, spite of poor Kate's tears and struggles, George obtained his kiss. Mrs. Podd entered the room at the moment, and Kate, as red as a rose, and sobbing with anger and agitation, ran and hid her face on her shoulder.

" Heyday !" said the housekeeper ; " I wonder at you, Mr. Hanson, kissing the girls like that."

“Like that! and pray how would you have me kiss them?”

“I wouldn’t have you kiss them at all, sir.”

“Why, what do you take me for? Pretty girls like young men to kiss them; you did yourself, old Poddy, when you were young.”

“I never was a pretty girl,” replied the housekeeper.

“Plain or pretty,” said George, “it’s all one; girls like to be kissed.”

“No they don’t,” sobbed Kate.

“You did, Podd; you know you did,” said George, trying to make the old woman laugh; “though you say you were *not* pretty, and though you were a little lame, *I* know——”

“What do you know, pray?”

“There *was* a young man——”

“A what, sir?”

“A young man—such a nice young man!—Ah, ah! Podd, you can’t help laughing; don’t you remember how *he* kissed you? just like this!” and George gave the old dame a smack that resounded through the house.

“Well, there’s no great harm, Kate, after

all," said she, unable to preserve her dignified gravity : " don't cry about a kiss ; he has kissed me too."

" But—he—he called me names," sobbed Kate.

" For shame, sir, to call a young lady names !"

" I only called her my little wife : there's no offence in that."

" Oh, dear ! if *that* was all, I see no harm. Go away, you foolish little girl, and dry your eyes : Mr. George meant no offence."

And as Kate ran out of the room to hide in her own chamber, the discreet housekeeper added in a low voice to the young man. " Time enough to think of *that*. But whenever you do look out for a wife, take my word for it, you could not do better."

CHAPTER VIII.

Why didst thou say
I was brighter far
Than the bright ray
Of the evening star?
Why didst thou come
Seeking my home,
Till I believed that thy love was sincere?
Oh, if thy vow
Wearies thee now,
Though I *may* weep for thee—never come
here.

To any one brought up in habits of idleness, a six weeks' initiation in the second-rate dissipations of a watering-place could not prove otherwise than destructive. If people will abandon young men, or rather boys, to the daily lounge of a provincial town, and, when not otherwise engaged at a party or ball, to the nightly filth of a provincial theatre, what can afterwards be expected of them! Will

they, when they go back to a Mapleton village, appreciate the enjoyments of rural life?—or at a Mapleton Rectory, can it be supposed that they will relish the homely fare, and diligently attend to the studies, to pursue which was the sole object of their being sent there?

Certain it is, that poor George Hanson, being once thoroughly unsettled, never again so much as affected the semblance of diligence at Mapleton: he was continually absent on short visits to his friends the Somervilles; and when he did spend a few days at the Rectory, Kate seemed to be his sole inducement, and by her side he contrived to pass the greatest part of his time.

Kate's existence was no longer all tranquillity: the visits of George Hanson were her sunshine, his absence her clouds. When walking by his side in the valley, and listening to his descriptions of more dazzling scenes, she was happy; and then, when she had heard his gay farewell, and a whispered promise of a speedy return, she would wander away from her

sister, to retrace in silent abstraction the path they had so recently trod together, treasuring up in her recollection every word that he had uttered. She had now become accustomed to the "*nickname*" which had at first so startled and offended her; and though to be called his "dear little wife" might call up a blush, she no longer coloured with resentment, nor answered with reproof.

Months had passed away since first in sport he had so addressed her; she knew no more of his engagements or amusements at Danesford than he had chosen to reveal to her; but during the whole of that period she could not be blind to the fact, that when he was at Mapleton, his whole thoughts, and apparently his whole heart, had been engrossed by herself.

To love him and to be loved again, as they had ever loved from infancy, and no more, was still, as she innocently thought, her only wish. For eighteen months his visits to Danesford, and, as he represented, to the Somervilles, had been continued. His home at Mapleton had become merely nominal; and

in his nineteenth year it was not probable that George Hanson would turn over a new leaf—nor indeed any leaf, of any book whatever.

The selfishness of the spoiled boy still characterised the young man. As long as Kate amused him, he lingered near her, and breathed those honied words of fondness and flattery, heard by her for the first time, and spoken by him—how often! She, the unsophisticated daughter of a country schoolmaster, who never in her life had enjoyed an opportunity of entering what is called “society;” he, the pampered pet of a provincial coterie—handsome and elegant, prematurely taken to parties by his mother, and since her death, courted by every dance-giving dowager in a country town where beaux were scarce;—how could she compete with him; how laugh off as badinage the words that sounded so like devoted love; how comprehend that what he said to her, he often had said to others; how believe that he was but selfishly enjoying the present without one serious thought about the

future—without once pausing to consider that his attentions might win her affections, and that when he had won them, desertion or indifference would render her miserable!

It may be said that it was Kate Leslie's duty to tell her father, or at least the old woman who loved her so well, all that had passed between her and young Hanson. But she had nothing to tell: he never "made love," as it is called, "in good set terms," nor in so many words said, "Ma'am, will you marry me?"

Young man as he was, he was too much a man of the world to commit himself by any unguarded expression approximating too much to the point. His eyes, his smile, his manner, the tone of his voice, implied everything—nay, much more than common-place plain people could express in words: but when he was gone, and his sentences were recollected, there was nothing which, if repeated, sounded at all like a declaration. Kate had positively nothing to tell. That when he was at Mapleton he was devoted to her, was evident to everybody;

and as the very few who were concerned about the matter could not but be glad to see a probability that the elder of the two sisters would find a protector and a home before she was deprived of her sole remaining parent, they thought it prudent to take no notice, and hope for the best.

Kate thought not of the future ; she had no schemes, nor had she even secretly indulged in any dream of a home shared with her companion. When he was absent, she wished for his return, and would not have concealed from any one that such was her wish ; and when he did return, satisfied with her own enjoyment of his presence, she thought only of rendering him happy during the period of his stay.

When he left Mapleton and poor Kate Leslie, it was to seek engagements that engrossed all his time and thoughts. Dress, dinners, dances, wine, beauty, cards, the theatre, the actresses ; what hours had he for meditation on the fair fond smile of one who, when he was gone, turned sadly to her books, her birds, her flowers,—thinking only of him,

treasuring his words in her memory, and his image in her heart !

It would seem strange that Kate was not disgusted with the selfishness of a man who, seeking her only when gayer scenes wearied him, left her unpitied in her solitude when his spirits again required excitement. But at her age, woman in proportion to her own guileless innocence is always fond, relying, and unsuspicious. When others blamed him, she was ever ready with an excuse for his conduct. "Had she been a man, she might have been as fond of change; how could she, or how could others tell? then wherefore judge him severely? Besides, of all young men, he had the best excuse for his irregularities,—early habit, and the neglect of his mother: and was it not natural he should think Mapleton dull? Two young girls were no fit companions for a spirited, active youth; and were he to sit down moping there for ever, perhaps those who now blamed his dissipation would be the very first to censure him for want of enterprise and energy."

Like all who love so young, she found an excuse for every action of her lover ; and when others pointed out his imperfections, she secretly wondered that one so perfect should waste a thought on her !

CHAPTER IX.

Once Folly tried to cheat the world,
Assuming Wit's demeanour,
And thought (poor fool) the darts *she* hurl'd
Than Wit's own darts were keener !
While those of Wit were used in sport,
And dipp'd in Pleasure's chalice,
Young Folly used another sort,
Whose only point was Malice.

A sly and secret aim she took—
But, ere one heart was wounded,
Upon *herself*, by some ill luck,
Each venom'd shaft rebounded.
So Wisdom ventured to express
This gentle hint to guide her:—
When Wit takes aim with most success,
Good-nature stands beside her.

Mr. and Mrs. SOMERSET SOMERVILLE were
what are called at watering-places, charming
young people, and great acquisitions to the

society. He was rich, vulgar, and uneducated, the orphan only child of some City body in some extensive trade. His father had borne the ugly name of Scroggings; but before his death he had been persuaded by his heir-apparent to change it, and diving into bygone annals of maternal connexions, a family named Somers, living somewhere in Somersetshire, was discovered; and though Somers was better than Scroggings, Somerville sounded better still, and Somerset Somerville best of all. So the money required for such changes of patronymic was paid down; and very soon afterwards, he who had borne the ugly name was buried in the new family-vault, and the name itself was buried in oblivion.

At two-and-twenty, with health in his face and money in his pocket, there's nobody a man may not marry. So thought Mr. Anthony Somerset Somerville, and from this general rule he scarcely excepted heiresses of crowns and sceptres. With a very high appreciation of his own comely face, he set out in search of a wife.

Pretty young women had no chance whatever with him : he was in pursuit of a lady,—a lady in her own right ; connexion was what he wanted ; and he bored every master of the ceremonies at every watering-place in turn, to introduce him to scions of noble houses and sprigs of nobility. After fishing for ladies for some months without getting even a nibble, he had the felicity of being presented to the Honourable Miss Silverthorn, thirteenth daughter of the Right Honourable Lord Skinflint. The young lady's purse was most propitiously empty ; and his lordship, having made inquiries respecting the gentleman's wealth, was only too happy to make him stiff bows, take wine with him, and then at the altar to give away to him one of his thirteen maids of "*honour.*" Mr. Somerset Somerville handed the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville into a travelling carriage drawn by four greys, and then seated himself by her side, feeling desperately in love, not with the blood that mantled in the cheek of his bride, but with the blood of her ancestors. The Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville was

affected, silly, and insipid ; she writhed with affectation ; she wriggled as she walked ; she squeezed up her little dull eyes, and peered at people through her glass, and thought it knowing and pretty to seem to misunderstand every word that was addressed to her. If she met anybody anywhere whose person was unknown to her, the air with which she looked at the stranger, and inquired who it could be, implied that she suspected her hostess had been guilty of the daring impropriety of asking the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville to a "*mixture*."

For the individual who had paid his addresses to her she never felt the slightest partiality ; but, after slighting and insulting him, she was made acquainted with the very handsome settlements which he had offered to make, and she then coldly listened to his proposals, and as coldly became his wife.

He certainly had in some degree risen in her estimation, because the person who was in the position of husband to one so distinguished as herself shone with a borrowed light, and could

not be actually contemptible: but, knowing that the less that was said about his origin and family the better, she never named him when absent, seldom spoke to him when present, and took care to impress upon all her acquaintances that Mr. Somerset Somerville had no one merit to entitle him to toleration in society, beyond that of having been permitted to lead to the hymeneal altar the thirteenth daughter of the Right Honourable Lord Skinflint.

Such were the friends with whom George Hanson was now almost domesticated. Youth and high spirits are sure of being warmly welcomed in a provincial town by those whose study it is to make their houses agreeable. There were no military at Danesford, and no hounds were kept in its immediate neighbourhood. Had there been barracks, and a dozen or two of sporting-men, a mere boy like George would have been suffered to remain at Mapleton; but a Danesford dowager about to give a ball, after making out a long and fair list of dancing ladies, was sure to be sadly puzzled when she commenced a corresponding catalogue

of dancing-men. Under such circumstances, the clerks at Messrs. Dibbs's bank, and even those of Mr. Sinlove, the lawyer, were acceptable; the assistant of the apothecary was not considered objectionable; and two or three neighbouring curates, in sables and lavender-coloured gloves, were kept in a state of perpetual motion: the sons of resident gentry, caught in a college vacation, or even at home for the holidays, were put upon the list of *mankind*; and elderly bachelors, no matter how fat, were expected to be frisky.

No wonder, then, that George Hanson, at nineteen, manly for his age, and particularly handsome, should have become at Danesford a person of infinite importance.

Lord Skinflint's family had long ago formed an intimacy with Lord William Hanson. When that nobleman condescended to marry Miss Gubbins, the daughter of an apothecary, his aristocratic friends had set about forgetting his existence as fast as they could. The Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville had (though she was short-sighted when she chose it) a quick

eye for beauty, and happening to meet our hero, she was struck with his appearance, and inquired who he was. The grandson of a duke had much merit in her eyes, and she resolved to invite so well-connected a young gentleman to her next party. She sent George a note, in which she mentioned the intimacy which had existed formerly between her family and his own. He was delighted to avail himself of the invitation; and shortly afterwards, on being pressed to accept a bed at the house, instead of remaining a fortnight, the period at first named, his first visit, as we have seen, extended to six weeks, and was followed up by so many other visits, that at last his little apartment at Mapleton Rectory was very seldom tenanted.

Mrs. Somerville had no idea of the possibility of enjoying home in a quiet way. To make her fireside tolerable, it was necessary to light quantities of wax-candles, make the knocker of her street-door send forth thunder, and fill her three drawing-rooms so full, that standing-room was not to be obtained. She and her husband were certainly not entertaining people in one

sense of the word ; but in another acceptation of it, no one in Danesford entertained so much. George was always a welcome guest ; and when his friends went to parties given by other people, he always accompanied them.

On one occasion, the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville condescended, after much hesitation, to accept the invitation of a Mrs. Pringle, a lady recently established in the town ; and as Mr. Somerville delighted not only in finishing his bottle, but also in occasionally diving deeply into a second, he was left dozing in his dining-room, while his wife and his young guest proceeded to the *soirée*.

The honourable lady, impressed with a deep sense of the honour she was conferring, entered the ball-room with her glass at her eye, and a sort of hesitating, inquiring, examining expression on her countenance. Her poor hostess, vulgarly enough, stepped forward with profuse thanks for the honour conferred on her.

“ Oh, don't mention it, pray,” replied Mrs. Somerset Somerville, looking round ; “ you've really managed wonderfully with these small rooms.”

“Pray come out of the draught of the door,” said Mrs. Pringle.

“Oh, thank you; if I see any one I know, I will find a seat by her.”

“I believe you will find all your friends here.”

“Who is *that*, pray?” inquired the guest, staring at a lady whose name she knew perfectly.

“Mrs. Watts: pretty, is she not?”

“Watts?—Oh! Mrs. Watts! I *thought* it must be her, but was not aware she was in society.”

“I hope,” said Mrs. Pringle, colouring,—“I hope you will find some of your set in that room.”

“Oh, I shall do very well,” said Mrs. Somerville; and, peering through her glass, she proceeded, and seemed to sniff at everybody who passed her.

George, already thoroughly selfish, acquired from his companion the habit of turning into ridicule the failings and weak points of all who passed before him, and also that apathetic dis-

regard of their feelings without which such a propensity cannot be indulged.

“Really, Mr. Hanson,” said Mrs. Somerville in a tone of voice intentionally loud enough to be distinctly heard by a group of Danesford residents who thoroughly enjoyed themselves,—“really I cannot vegetate at this dull place much longer.”

“Dull!” replied George; “you have never allowed *me* to think it so.”

“Oh, you have never yet enjoyed a London season.”

“I am sure I shall never come into Danesford when you and Mr. Somerville are gone.”

“You must come and see us in town.”

“I should be delighted,” replied George, who never yet had ventured to think of deliberately leaving Mapleton for any length of time; “but——”

“But what?”

“Why, you will laugh at me, I know; but I have always considered Mapleton my home, and Mr. Leslie my guardian, and——”

“And Miss Leslie your little wife?”

“Oh, you are jesting! I should be most happy to leave Mapleton in the spring to enjoy your society in London; but the fact is, I think Mr. Leslie will object.”

“Object! are you to be a schoolboy for ever?”

“Nay; surely Mr. Leslie does not exert much of a schoolmaster’s authority, even now that I am nominally with him.”

“Certainly not: and very proper that he should not. At your age, the more you see of society the better.”

Mrs. Pringle at this moment politely walked up to Mrs. Somerville.

“Will not your young friend dance?” said she.

“Dance, ma’am!” exclaimed Mrs. Somerville, looking through her eye-glass.

“I should be so happy to introduce him to Miss Trotter!”

“Miss Trotter?”

“Yes; a sweet girl.”

“Sir Mandeville Trotter’s daughter?” inquired Mrs. Somerville, knowing perfectly well

Sir Mandeville and his family were a hundred miles off.

“ Oh dear, no ; the Trotters, you know——”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Mrs. Somerville, affecting to recollect herself, “ the medical gentleman : thank you,—no. Should you venture on giving us a waltz by-and-by, Mr. Hanson will take a turn with me.”

The hostess, thoroughly mortified, withdrew ; and Mrs. Somerville and her companion having done their utmost to make her dissatisfied with her party, they rose and waltzed together only just long enough to make “ the attempt and not the deed confound” Mrs. Pringle, who could not avoid hearing Mrs. Somerville declare it was impossible to waltz in so small a room, and to such execrable music.

CHAPTER X.

**I want to go upon the stage,
And wear a wig and feathers :
I envy each tragedian
The laurels that he gathers.**

**In tragic moods I push my wig
High up upon my forehead ;
I cork my eyebrows, and assume
A look that 's very horrid.**

**Genteelly comic I can be,
And farcically sprightly ;
I 'm excellent in pantomime,
In ballet parts dance lightly.**

PRIVATE theatricals at Danesford ! what an attractive announcement ! How delightful for the amateurs themselves to dress up, and paint their faces, and walk about, and talk loud ! And for the audience, how interesting to see

Mr. Somerville, a real gentleman, with pockets full of money, do that badly for nothing at all which they had all seen Mr. Middleton, of the theatre, do admirably well, earning his bread at a salary of thirty shillings a week ! Then the supercilious Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville was actually going to undertake a part ; and to see her talking without peering through her glass, would at least be a novelty. "The Rivals" was the unfortunate comedy selected for misrepresentation ; Mrs. Somerville's best drawing-room was rendered thoroughly uninhabitable, carpets up, stage erected, drops here, wings there, stage-lamps, green curtain, and place for fiddlers.

The casting of the characters is always a serious undertaking ; but Mrs. Somerset Somerville was on all ordinary occasions so despotic, that nobody thought of resisting her decrees on this important one.

George Hanson was almost beside himself with joy, for he was to be Captain Absolute : and to strut his hour in regimentals was the height of his ambition. A fat, vulgar old

man was selected for Sir Anthony Absolute, more like Daniel Dowlas, "a lord's warming-pan," than a baronet or private gentleman. Sir Lucius was a young Englishman, who was to do the brogue as best he could. Falkland was an aristocratic cousin to the lady-manager, who lisped, and pronounced his words fine, and walked about like a doll on wires. Mr. Somerville was to be Acres, without humour, or even memory to retain the words of his part. He had no one requisite for the character, except his innate vulgarity;—and vulgarity won't quite make an Acres.

In all the little world of Danesford no real lady could be found who would take a part, with the exception of the lady of the mansion, who had undertaken Julia.

"What is to be done?" said George, thinking of his uniform, which had been tried on, and fitted admirably.

"We must give it up!" replied Mrs. Somerville: "really there's no use in trying to set things going in such a place as this!"

"And there have I been and learnt seven

pages and a half of Bob Acres!" said her husband.

"There is but one way!" she exclaimed.

"What is that?" inquired George, brightening up.

"Your friends at Mapleton."

"Well?"

"You must invite them for me, and get them to take the parts."

"What parts?"

"Mrs. Malaprop."

"What! old Mrs. Podd?"

"I don't know who you mean by old Mrs. Podd; but there are two sisters, are there not?—two Miss Leslie?"

"Yes,—Kate and Jane."

"Well, they will only be too glad to get here on any terms. Invite them for me: stipulating,—that one is to play Mrs. Malaprop, and the other Lydia Languish."

George's hopes sank again.

"My dear madam, they would not do it,—they could not: and had they the will and the power, their father never would allow it."

“No, no, not quite that; but old Middleton, the comic actor at the playhouse——”

“Lydia Languish?”

“How can you be so provoking! No—to be sure not,—but Mrs. Malaprop.”

“Upon my word, not a bad idea! I see no objection to that; and we can make the man our stage-manager.”

“Well, then,” cried George, with a faint hope that, after all, the regimentals might be worn, “there is no difficulty now but Lydia.”

“And that is the worst,” replied the already weary *student* of Bob Acres. “No man can play Lydia Languish; so we must give it up.”

“I have an idea!” interrupted Mr. Skinflint.

“What is it?” inquired his fair cousin incredulously.

“That man Middleton——”

“What, Lydia Languish!”

“No, no; you have that him down for Mitheth Malaprop. But I’ve heard he has a daughter.”

“A regular actress from the Danesford theatre? Oh, impossible!”

"You are tho prethipitate ; The ith not an actreth."

"No ;" said George, "it is quite true. Middleton is to have a benefit by-and-by ; and somebody said that his daughter, a girl of sixteen, was to make her first appearance on that occasion."

"Oh ! she has *never* been before the public ?"

"Never."

"That alters the case ; and of course he will be delighted to bring her forward under our auspices. George, write him a note, and offer him fifty pounds for the services of himself and daughter."

"Fifty pounds !" exclaimed Mr. Somerville ; "fifty pounds is really a large sum."

"Fifty guineas for their performance on that night," continued his honourable lady, going on as if he had not spoken, without even deigning to turn her eyes towards him.

"I will write with pleasure," replied George ; adding inquiringly, "Fifty pounds, I think you said ?"

“Guineas,” replied the lady ; and George went off to make the arrangement.

The poor provincial actor gladly entered into the proposed engagement ; and at the first rehearsal he joined the aristocratic party, and presented to them as the representative of Lydia Languish, his only child Mary.

George thought he had never (*but once*) seen so fresh, so fair, so interesting a creature. She stood before them on their little elevated stage, not only, like themselves, a novice in the art of acting ;—she was doubly a novice : she found herself among strangers, all of whom were her superiors in rank and station, and she could have sat down and cried, overcome by anxiety and alarm.

She was one of those gentle girls who come forth pure, guileless, and uncontaminated from a sphere to which we are apt to impute general corruption. Her only parent, a veteran actor, who, though possessed of very considerable ability, had never had the good fortune to obtain a metropolitan engagement, had been deprived of his young wife when Mary was an infant.

He was one of those men whose character and conduct do honour to a profession which is too often stigmatised and condemned on account of the disreputable eccentricities of some of its less worthy members : but it should not be forgotten that in this, as in other walks of life, respectability goes quietly on its way unnoticed, while reckless infamy acquires notoriety. Poor Mr. Middleton had toiled willingly for fifteen years for the support and education of his pretty child ; and now that he saw her fast ripening into womanhood, and possessed of extraordinary beauty, he trembled when he reflected that he had no alternative but to launch her on an ocean beset with countless shoals, storms, and quicksands, but through which some few admirable women have safely steered, and reached a haven and a home, where honour and tranquillity have awaited them, with a pure and spotless reputation, only rendered the more triumphant by the dangers they have overcome.

Who could behold Mary's modest countenance and fragile form, and endure the idea

that, painted and decked in tinsel robes, she must become the flattered, favourite actress, or, slighted and unsuccessful, encounter disapprobation and contempt !

George Hanson, though he never could plod through a task, or learn by heart a lesson that was given to him, had an apt memory for all matters that pleased his own fancy, and at the first rehearsal Captain Absolute required no prompter. Lydia Languish was equally perfect ; and while all the other performers, with the exception of Mrs. Malaprop, were stammering, hesitating, and peeping into their books, this pair of lovers went glibly through their parts, and acted with spirit and effect.

Daily and nightly were these rehearsals repeated. When not engaged in the business of the scene, George was always at Mary's elbow ; or rather, perhaps, we ought to say that Captain Absolute kept up his character, and continued his flirtation with Miss Languish. The timid girl, thrown so suddenly among strangers, felt cheered by his kindness, and grateful for his attention ; and before the arrival of the

night of performance, the representative of the Captain became as interesting to her as the Captain is supposed to be to the lady she represented.

During this busy month George never went to Mapleton. He, however, so far remembered the existence of its inmates as to prevail upon Mrs. Somerset Somerville to invite the family to her entertainment. After much deliberation, the two girls, principally through the ever-ready intercession of Mrs. Podd, obtained permission to go; and a chaperon having been found, every obstacle was removed, and Mrs. Marlow and the Miss Leslies were announced by Mrs. Somerville's powdered footmen, and having arrived early, (as guests from the country invariably do,) they obtained very excellent places, and had an opportunity of overlooking the proceedings of the people who lighted the lamps.

At length the theatre filled, the music played, the curtain rose, and George Hanson, most becomingly dressed, and looking handsomer than ever, appeared upon the stage. Poor

Kate had not seen him for a whole month; and now that every other person welcomed him with applause or with smiles, she sat, she knew not why, silent, sad, in tears! No one noticed her, no one thought of her — not even Jane, whose exclamations were full of natural delight and wonder. Unobserved, she wiped away her tears, tried to attribute them to the novelty of the scene and over-excitement, and resolved to be amused as others were. But no! all passed before her like a dream, indistinct and painful. A lovely girl stood at George's side: she heard words of endearment; but his looks, and the tone of his voice, conveyed to her accustomed ear a fonder, deeper meaning than the words. But it was a play;—he was acting, merely reciting sentences written down for him, and giving them appropriate action and intonation. It was all *make believe*:—was it so? She knew him well, and she thought *not*!

When George and his fair companion left the stage, Kate became abstracted, insensible: others laughed and applauded, but she heard

not the applause, nor its cause ; but the moment he or Mary appeared, she started almost with an exclamation of pain, and riveted her eyes upon the stage.

The drama came to a conclusion, the curtain fell, and Kate, worn out with her long struggle against emotions unaccountable to herself, hurried Jane away, and threw herself back in the hired carriage which was to take them back to Mapleton. The younger sister, fascinated with the novelty of the scene, talked rapidly in praise of all the performers, but particularly of George Hanson and the lovely Lydia Languish : but, in the midst of her eulogies, she was startled by a low hysteric sob, and turning anxiously to Kate, she found that she had fainted.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, leave me to my sorrow,
For my heart is oppress'd to-day ;
Oh, leave me, and to-morrow
Dark shadows may pass away.
There 's a time when all that grieves us
Is felt with a deeper gloom ;
There 's a time when hope deceives us,
And we dream of bright days to come.

“ WELL, dear, and what said Master George last night ?” inquired Mrs. Podd, as she sat on Kate's bedside the morning after the play, holding her feverish hand, and trying to peep at her pale face, which she seemed determined to conceal as much as possible with the bed-clothes.

“ Nothing.”

“ Nothing ! pooh ! — what excuse did he make for not coming home all this time ?”

“ None.”

“Are you hoarse, my dear?”

“No; only tired. Leave me, and I’ll get up.”

“If you are tired, you had better stay where you are. But tell me about Master George.”

“I have nothing to tell; that is—except—”

“Ay, come, now for it!—except what?”

“Oh, about his acting. But Jane will tell you all that better than I, for I was unwell.”

“Did he ask for *me*?” inquired the persevering old woman.

“No; he was not with us.”

“What! did he not come round among the lookers-on?”

“Yes—once or twice; but he did not seem to see us.”

“But if he had looked about, I suppose he could have found you?”

“I suppose so,” faintly answered Kate.

“Oh!”

There was a pause. Mrs. Podd descended from the side of the bed, and took two or three hasty turns up and down the little room.

Kate's face was turned towards the pillow, but she could hear the *pat-pat* noise of her high shoe.

"I wish that boy had never come to this house!" said she, again perching herself on the quilt. Kate's heart would not allow her to second the wish, and she was silent.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I see how it is, and I have foreseen it all along!—you love him, as well you might: and what will become of us if he don't love you!"

Kate in an instant sat erect in her bed; and seizing both Mrs. Podd's hands in her own, she pressed them, and looking earnestly in her face, said, in an unnatural hissing whisper,

"Hush, for God's sake! You—you cannot mean what you say, and 'tis not a theme for jest."

"Jest! my poor lamb! Oh! when I see him again—"

"Oh, dear nurse, don't frighten me so! don't let me dread your indiscretion. You do not—you cannot mean to say that you will speak to him on such a subject!"

“No, no,—I am an old fool, and don’t much know the ways of the world; but I’m not so bad as that. What is to be done?”

“Done!—nothing,” replied Kate, trying to smile, and sinking back on her pillow.

“Nothing! and your happiness is to be sacrificed, and you are to suffer in secret, and all for a boy’s selfishness!”

“Dear nurse, you mistake: I—I *may* have been hurt at—at a friend’s neglect; but when you impute love, you—”

“I am *not* mistaken, Kate,—old as I am, diminutive, and lame. My face, as they told me, did not want attraction once; and when I looked in the glass, I saw bright eyes and a white skin, and thought not of the deformity that was not there reflected! I forgot my lameness, and I loved! ha, ha!—*I*, with my high shoe and my crooked back;—why don’t you laugh, Kate?—everybody laughed when they heard it;” and the old woman passed her hand hastily over her eyes.

“Dear nurse,” cried Kate, “you know we love you.”

“ Yes, yes ; and what I ’m talking of is the by-gone folly of fifteen, nobody knows how many years ago. But since then, as I ’ve never been wooed, I ’ve had leisure and a keen eye to watch the wooings of others ; and after all I ’ve seen, I ’d call a curse upon that boy if he forsakes you ! ”

“ Oh, nurse, for shame !—you are wrong, very wrong, to say this.”

“ Who gave you that ring ? You need not answer ; I know it was his gift.”

Kate made no reply.

“ Tell me,” said Mrs. Podd, “ as he was inattentive to you last night, to whom was he attentive ? ”

“ To no one in particular, — that is—except on the stage.”

“ Well ? ”

“ A young actress, I believe.”

“ Do you mean to say that he seemed *really* interested about her ? ”

“ I do.”

“ Oh, if that is all, it must have been only what the playbook taught him to say ; and

I've good news :—those friends of his with the two long names are going to London in a few days, and then he will come back here, and get into his old habits, and love us all better than ever."

Kate shook her head. "Does my father know I was ill last night?" she said.

"Oh, deary-me, no; he thinks you are fatigued, and hopes you will never go out again."

"I almost hope I never shall!" replied Kate; and, to end a discussion which had given her infinite pain, not only by opening her eyes to her own feelings, but by proving also that one person at least had detected them, she made preparations for rising; and kind Mrs. Podd, kissing her affectionately, bade her hope for the best, and then went *pat-pat* down stairs to provide dinner for the little boys.

Young ladies who, having regularly "*come out*" into the world, know a little of the ways of the worldly, will think that Kate was a silly girl for allowing her heart to be so entirely engrossed by one who had never uttered more

than the general language of admiration, without coming to the important question. But it must be remembered, that our heroine had never been to a party in her life; and, living out of the world, she had no mother to tell her of its usages, and to warn her of the peril of the woman who, guileless and affectionate herself, listens to an artful and cold-hearted young man, whose flattering phrases, so new to her, have been learnt, and already oft repeated, in a gay sphere of which she knows nothing.

Had not Kate been motherless, so unrestricted an intimacy between her and her father's pupil, young as they were, probably would not have been permitted. They had been playfellows as boy and girl, until, imperceptibly to themselves, time had brought to him the graces and maturity of manhood, and to her the stature and the beauty of a woman. As imperceptibly, too, had the thoughtless joyousness of childhood passed from her: the veil had fallen from her eyes, and with shame she acknowledged to herself that she loved!

Once aware of an error, Kate's well-regulated mind instantly resolved resolutely to amend it. Some days would probably elapse before George's return to Mapleton: during his absence, she determined on the line of conduct it would be most prudent to pursue: when he did arrive, no word or look, she thought, should betray her past folly, and, for the future, the very consciousness of her indiscretion would preserve her from its indulgence.

CHAPTER XII.

'Twill remind you of me, though the token
Be neither of silver nor gold ;
'Twill remind you of words you have spoken,
How fond—must now never be told :
Of the days when I thought your affection,
Like mine, everlasting would be.
Yes—though you may fly from reflection,
That still will remind you of me !

'Twill remind you of me though you shun it
And throw it aside with disdain ;
You will one day look sadly upon it,
And sigh for your first love again :
That gift will be seen among many,
And *mine* the least costly may be—
And yet perchance dearer than any,
Because 'twill remind you of me !

HAD Kate Leslie been a little less deeply interested about one of the principal actors, she might have derived some amusement from the performance of “ The Rivals ” at the resi-

dence of Mrs. Somerset Somerville. The amusement was certainly not such as Sheridan's excellent comedy usually conveys: in fact, though "The Rivals" had been *promised* in the play-bill, something very unlike it was *performed*.

Fortunately, Captain Absolute, Lydia Languish, and Mrs. Malaprop are frequently thrown together in the scene; and these parts being adequately filled, there was now and then some genuine applause; and occasionally laughter was excited by the wit of the comedy, and not by the absurd incapacity of the actors.

But Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger were worse than nonentities; and their omissions, and mistakes, and the silly way in which they uttered the little which they did remember, caused more fatigue than mirth in the spectators.

But Falkland and Julia were admirable in their way. Mrs. Somerset Somerville acted on her stage just as she was accustomed to walk and talk in her drawing-room: she spoke to her lover with the same supercilious

drawl, and for the life of her she could not help sometimes squeezing up her eyes and looking through her glass in the middle of a fine speech.

Falkland, in an embroidered waistcoat, and chains, and brooches, and a curled wig, was Mr. Skinflint, and nobody else in the world; and his recitation of the part defies description. After his first scene with Julia, there was a shout of laughter and three rounds of applause. To quote his speech will convey to the reader but a faint idea of his merit :

“ The ’s not coming, nor don’t intend it, I thuppoth. Thith ith not theadineth, but obthi-nathy !—Yet I detherve it. What ! after tho long an abthenth to quarrel with her tender-neth !—’twath barbarouth, and unmanly ; I thould be athamed to thee her now. I ’ll wait till her juth rethentment ith abated ; and when I dithtreth her tho again, may I loth her for ever !”

Mrs. Somerset Somerville was no fool, and she was perfectly aware, that while applause was bestowed upon some of the performers, she

had rendered herself ridiculous, and that her husband had been a mere buffoon. She attributed her own failure to the lisp of her cousin Skinflint; and dissatisfied with George Hanson, partly on account of his success, but particularly because he had been attentive to the timid Mary Middleton, the bright star of the evening, she shut herself up in her chamber for several days, and only left it to go forth and distribute farewell cards through the town.

Among the departures in the Danesford Herald for the following week appeared, "Mr. and the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville, for their mansion in Belgrave Square;" and the "mansion" having been secured for the season, they were on their way to the metropolis.

Kate Leslie saw the paragraph, and expected the immediate return of George, without knowing whether to wish for, or to dread his presence. She arranged his apartment as she had often done before, and she gathered fresh flowers and placed them on his table,

because he had always been accustomed to find a bouquet there, and as he had done nothing to warrant her withholding so trifling an attention, her omitting it would excite surprise. But he came not ! a whole week passed away, and still no message arrived, no excuse for his protracted delay.

“ Where are you going ?” said Kate to Mrs. Podd one day, seeing her arrayed in bonnet and cloak as if for church on a Sunday.

“ I ’m going to Danesford, my dear,” she replied, in a tone of voice which betokened ill-humour, and with a rapid *pat-pat* about the room, indicative of disquietude of mind.

“ To Danesford, nurse !—you ! Why, what *can* have happened to take you to Danesford ?”

“ Oh, my dear,” said the old lady, “ many things may occur to take people to Danesford who have as little business there as myself ;—ay, and to keep them too :” and she untied the strings of her cloak, merely that her fingers might give vent to her indignation by fastening it again with violence.

“What is the matter?” inquired Kate seriously: “you are angry—with whom?”

“You need not ask with whom.”

“Nurse, if you love me——”

“If I love you!”

“You do love me, I doubt it not; but do not rashly do that which ought rather to be the act of an enemy. Do not degrade me!”

“Well!” exclaimed Mrs. Podd, *pat-patting* up and down the room with vehemence; “it is very odd I may not go to Danesford about my own private business without being catechised and having my feelings hurt!”

“You cannot mean what you say!” replied Kate reproachfully.

“I *do* mean that I don’t like to be stopped and questioned.”

“Well, then, nurse I beg your pardon.”

“Don’t look angry.”

“I am not angry.”

“But don’t feel hurt and annoyed,” said the old woman, sidling up to Kate: “what I do is for the best, for I cannot bear to see you look so sad.”

“Your going to Danesford, then, *does* concern me?”

“I must *just* go and see what keeps *him* there.”

“Oh! nurse, you will betray—you will degrade me.”

“No, no, he shall not see me; or if he does, I will not mention your name; or if I do, I will not let him see that *we* care about him.”

“Oh! promise me that, and—and I should like to—yet why—*why* should I think more of him?”

“Because you can’t help it, my dear; and that’s always the way with us women.”

“I rely on your discretion, nurse,” said Kate; and Mrs. Podd, having kissed her cheek, took a basket under her left arm, and, with her crutch-stick in her right hand, off she went to Danesford, *put-pat* along the gravel-walk, faster than many people would have gone whose two legs were of equal measurement.

Mrs. Podd’s discretion might well be trusted; she was not one to betray the weaknesses of her sex: but let her actions and words elucidate her character.

She called at the house lately occupied by the Somervilles, and was informed that Mr. Hanson had taken apartments in the High-street. Thither she then proceeded; and finding the young man at home, she was, after some delay, shown up into his sitting-room.

"Ah! Mrs. Podd," cried he, "I'm charmed to see you!"

A low curtsy was her sole reply.

"How are all at Mapleton?"

"I'm very well, thank you, sir," said she with another obeisance.

"I see you are. Will you take a glass of wine after your walk?—and pray sit down."

"Thank you kindly," replied Mrs. Podd, taking possession of an easy-chair, putting down her basket, and untying her cloak, as if she intended to spend the evening.

"Well, you have not yet told me how you left all at home."

"Oh!" cried Podd, looking up, opening her eyes wide, and leaning back in the chair, "of course you've heard——"

"Heard what?" exclaimed her young host with evident interest.

“What a world of change this is!” she replied, wiping her eyes with her apron.

“What is the matter?”

“High and low, rich and poor, the prince and the peasant, and the brute creation; it’s the common lot,—the grave! the grave!”

“Good God!” exclaimed George, “what *has* occurred?—not old Mr. Leslie?”

“Oh, he’s well enough. Death strikes the young as often as the old: and so young, too!”

“For mercy’s sake, old woman, say at once what you allude to!” and George filled a bumper of wine, and having drunk it, leant against the mantelpiece as pale as ashes.

“He *does* care for her,” *thought* Mrs. Podd.

“You do not speak,” he cried.

“You’re the same kind creature you ever were!” she exclaimed.

“Do not keep me longer in suspense.”

“You remember my cat?”

“Yes, yes.”

“My tortoiseshell cat?”

“What has *he* to do with it?”

"It was a female: indeed I never saw a tortoiseshell tom."

"Good heavens! are you mad, to talk such stuff?"

"My poor cat's dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Podd, chuckling to herself at the agitation she had excited; and George, having drunk another glass of wine, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, walked to the window, threw up the sash, and leant forward to breathe the fresh air.

"We shall soon have him back again," *thought* the old woman. "Here's a present for you, sir," she *said*.

"A present!" he exclaimed, turning round.

"Yes; a beautiful one too;" and she took from her basket a little roasting-pig.

"An't it like a babby?" she added, placing it on the table.

"Delicious, I've no doubt," replied the young man, recovering himself. "To whom am I indebted for this?"

"To me, to be sure: it's well for you one person at Mapleton remembers you."

“ *Only* one ?”

“ Only myself, that *I* know of. Old Leslie, indeed ——”

“ Oh, nonsense ! never mind him.”

“ Well, Mr. Ibbotson ——”

“ Pshaw ! the girls,—Kate ?”

“ Oh ! young things *will* be young things, you know ; and Kate and Jane are always so merry, that ——”

“ They have no time to miss *me* ?”

“ No time, I hope, to miss *any one* who proves by his actions that he don’t deserve to be remembered ;” and the old lady, in that sort of flurry which people get into after saying an angry sentence, rose, and tied her cloak, and took up her empty basket.

“ Not *deserve* to be remembered !” said George.

“ No ; surely Mr. Leslie’s kindness, weak as he is, poor man ! merited gratitude from you. The girls, indeed,—and Kate in particular,—always stop me when I say this.”

“ Ah ! does she ?”

“ Yes ; she says, that she wonders at my

thinking it worth while to mention it seriously, —in fact, that I was making much ado about nothing."

George coloured and bit his lips.

"I'm *sure* he cares for her," *thought* Mrs. Podd.

"Hadn't I better send you the rest of your linen?" she said; "for I suppose you're not coming back soon."

"I ought to return—yes, I *will* return,—the end of next week. I would come at once, but I have promised to patronise a benefit at the theatre. You know I am become quite an actor; I suppose Kate told you?"

"Told me what?"

"She saw me act at Mrs. Somerville's."

"Did she? Oh, she never mentioned it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed George, evidently mortified. "Well, I shall see her next week. And, by-the-by, here are tickets for the theatre on the night of the benefit I mentioned; there will be a splendid house: I have promised to play,—I act Romeo."

"On the public stage?"

“ Yes :—you are going without the tickets.”

“ I will take them,” replied Mrs. Podd with a toss of her head ; “ but no one from Mapleton will come so far to see you make a fool of yourself :” and before he could reply, the old woman’s high shoe was heard *pat-pat* down his staircase, and the street-door closed with a tremendous bang.

In spite of all his faults, George was at this moment to be pitied. The voice of his old friend had suddenly called up a host of old associations, and affections long trampled on and insulted swelled at his young heart until tears testified their existence. For one so inexperienced we may be permitted to feel, even while we acknowledge that his sufferings have been the result of his own folly. We are not going to draw the picture of mature depravity, and at the same time to attempt to interest the feelings and affections of the reader for one so unworthy by clothing his vices in a captivating garb of beauty and generosity : but over the errors of a youth not yet twenty, the sternest moralist may pause with

deep commiseration, and with a fervent prayer for his amendment. Great as had been his selfish disregard of his earliest companions, and his ingratitude to the old man whose house had been to him a home, the neglect of his parent, the incapacity of his preceptor, and the fascination of dissipated worldly associates offer some palliation for his conduct ; and were the better feelings of his nature re-awakened, were he under the influence of some pure being whom he loved and respected, she might yet lead him to a safer and a happier path, teaching him to share with her, in temptation the safeguard, in sorrow the consolation, and in joy the thankfulness of RELIGION.

When George heard the street-door violently close, he paced his chamber, bitterly repenting his unkind neglect of Kate. 'Tis true he had broken no vow ; but he felt acutely his own cowardice in having implied every sentiment of love by his manner, yet without giving utterance to love's name, or breathing one honest intelligible sentence which could be quoted in evidence against the man whose unsolicited de-

votion was suddenly withdrawn, and followed by heartless desertion.

But there was another, younger than poor Kate Leslie, and not less fair, with whom George had been less on his guard ; and now that the virtues of his first love rose before him, with many a sweet recollection of happy hours gone by, he cursed his folly, and threw himself on his sofa in despair.

Mr. Middleton, the low comedian of the Danesford theatre, was too keenly sensible of the delicacy of his lovely daughter's position to permit a handsome young man of George's station in society to pay her marked attention, and visit at his humble lodgings, without keeping strict watch. Greatly to his mortification, the gay Lothario was often refused admission ; a whispered assignation was disregarded, and a note returned unopened. What might have proved a mere boyish fancy was thus strengthened by opposition : his self-love was piqued ; and to obtain the sanction of the father, and the presence of Mary herself, he was led into the utterance of promises and protestations,

which, now that his old and deeply-rooted attachment for Kate was roused, pressed heavily upon his conscience.

“What have I done!” cried George, suddenly starting up. “Kate! dear Kate—dearer to me than all the world! how basely have I used thee!—And this poor gentle girl—this actress! to her I have uttered vows that must never be fulfilled; for, with all her fascination, I feel not for her the love that I have felt for thee! To both I have been a traitor,—a heartless, selfish, mean, ungrateful traitor! Oh! why was I born,—or why by folly and neglect rendered so regardless of the feelings of others, so careless of my own happiness!”

Again he paced his room for many minutes, silent and abstracted; and then he paused and opened a desk, from which he took some papers. The first he opened contained a long ringlet of Kate’s brown hair; and from the next he showered upon the table the withered remains of flowers, gathered in the sunshine of a summer whose brightness he had shared with Kate, when they were both two years younger.

Tears fell from his eyes, and, clasping his hands, he cried, "Kate, I feel thou art my better angel ! I know my own unworthiness,—I dread the unchecked passions that possess me ; my only chance of safety, of respectability, lies in thy love and guardianship ! Without thee I shall forget every good thought ; but with thee I shall pray again, as we have often prayed side by side in the old room at the Rectory,—and prayer will preserve me from sin."

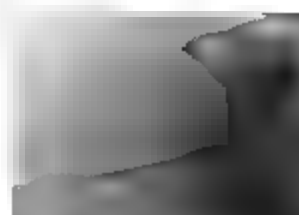
He pressed the faded flowers to his lips, and yielding to his present emotion, (and his feelings were always violent,) he leant his arms upon the table, buried his face in his hands, and wept like a child.

Hours passed away ere George Hanson roused himself ; and when he did so, he found that the daylight was gone, and the only dim light that stole into his chamber came from a lamp in the street opposite to his window.

"Ha !" he cried, starting up, "I am expected—I will go at once. Now or never I must end this intimacy.—Yes, I'll see her for the last time."

Again he deposited in his desk the simple remembrances of Kate Leslie, and, seizing his hat, went forth to gaze once more on the beautiful face of Mary Middleton.

Again he depended on his own the strong remembrance of Kate Linden, and, seeing his way was forth no gain, once more on the beautiful face of Mary Mendenham.



CHAPTER XIII.

Go woo some high-born lady,—
The world will bless your choice :
Alas ! too long already
I've listened to your voice.
Though bitter tears are blended
With all you hear me say,
Think not they are intended
As lures to make you stay.

IN a small but neat apartment, situated in an inferior street near the theatre, sat the old actor with his only child. The candles were not lighted, but the little fire blazed up and illuminated the room. Mr. Middleton sat in his arm-chair ; and at his feet, on a low stool, was Mary, her white hands clasped and resting on his knee, and her eyes raised to his face, as she listened to him.

“ It is an arduous life, dear child,” said he.

“I know it, father,” she replied; “but there is a double pleasure in overcoming its difficulties.”

“So few attain eminence!” he added, mournfully shaking his head.

“Few indeed; but, without brilliant success, enough may be earned to secure independence.”

“I am an evidence of that. But I grow old; and learning new parts, which was once an amusement to me, now grows irksome.”

“Then it is time for you to rest, and for me to work.—Do not shake your head. Do you doubt that it will be a pleasure to me to exert every energy for one who has so long laboured for me?”

“No, dear girl, I doubt it not,” said the old man, kissing her forehead; “but the effort is not the same. A man having conquered his timidity, if he have talent, must succeed; but a woman’s delicacy naturally shrinks from the publicity of such a career.”

“No, father, you are mistaken; the motive purifies the deed: and were I now stepping

forth upon the stage in that costume which I most dread,—a Viola—a Rosalind,—I think that I could resolutely raise my head and fix my eyes unshrinking on the purest and the proudest; for my heart would whisper, ‘I do this for my dear father!’”

Again the old man kissed her, and said, “I sometimes have hoped the effort would be unnecessary.”

“Unnecessary! What can you mean?”

“In one word, Mary, what think you of Mr. Hanson?”

“What do I think?”

“Yes,—tell me candidly. To escape from your profession, I would not for the world have you marry a rich man whom you could not love. But Mr. Hanson is, I believe, independent; and could I but see you happy in retirement with one who would be kind to you when I am dead, I should indeed rejoice.”

“Alas! I expect no such good fortune.”

“He has spoken to you of honourable love; you have confessed it: otherwise, my doors would have been closed against him.”

“ I am a simple girl, unused to the flattery of young men like Mr. Hanson, and may have misinterpreted his intentions.”

“ Either his intentions are honourable, Mary, or he is a villain : — have you any cause to doubt him ?”

“ No, no, none ; — he has been all kindness ; too kind, indeed. Hark ! that is his knock !” and she started up to light the candles.

“ It is time that we should understand him, Mary : I will watch him narrowly.”

“ Not with suspicion, father ; for suspicion finds evil in words and looks which was never intended.”

“ You love him, Mary.”

“ Hush ! he is on the stairs : — ’twas but an inconsiderate word of mine that raised this doubt in your mind ; forget it. When I spoke, I thought — perhaps — he would not come to-night ; but he is here, you see, — so think no more about it.” And she turned to welcome George, who, pale and agitated, now entered the room.

“ You are ill, Mr. Hanson !” exclaimed Mary.

“ I shall be better soon,” he replied; “ it is nothing—I am tired, exhausted.”

“ Oh, you do look very ill !” said the lovely girl, approaching him, and looking in his face as she spoke with a trembling anxiety that startled both her father and the object of her solicitude.

The old man stood with folded arms, and with his eyes intently fixed on Hanson’s countenance. When Mary had spoken, the young man glanced towards her father ; and, reading in the expression of his features the suspicions that possessed him, and his anxiety for his child, conscience-struck, he withdrew his eyes, and colouring like a detected boy, he leant back in his chair, passing his handkerchief over his forehead to hide his confusion.

“ What can we offer Mr. Hanson, father ?” cried the girl.

“ I have no wine to give you, sir,” said the old man coldly ; “ and probably you are unused to spirits.”

“ Thank you ; give me anything,” replied George, really overcome by anxiety and emotion.

“Yes, yes,” cried Mary, putting a kettle on the fire, and producing from a closet a bottle, tumbler and teaspoon, and a wine-glass; “the water will soon boil, and I will mix it for you.”

But George poured out a bumper of brandy and drank it off.

“Has any unforeseen event occurred to distress you?” inquired the actor.

“No,—yes—something that I ought not to have heeded; but there *are* moments, you know, when trifles overpower us.”

“The old know it well, sir,—especially those who have to contend with life’s storms, and who dread the grave only because they must leave behind them some loved being who looks to them for protection.”

He spoke with energy, and George made no reply.

“Can you not imagine such anxiety? You need not go far for an example; look at me.”

Mary, who was engaged in preparing the refreshment she had promised George, looked anxiously round.

“Nay, dear father, Mr. Hanson is ill and depressed already ; choose some more cheerful theme.”

“It was Mr. Hanson’s presence, Mary, that suggested this sad theme to me.”

Mary resumed her occupation ; and George, trying to laugh, said,—“I ’m sure I regret having brought blue devils with me, then.”

“I would always have those who profess to be my friends come to me openly and frankly, as they really are, without a mask. If they are happy, their happiness will do me good ; for though I may not share it, I shall be pleased with their prosperity. If they are unhappy, I will do all that poverty *can* do to lighten their affliction. Anything is better than deception,—*is it not ?*”

“Certainly,” replied George, in some confusion ; “but you must not make light of the troubles of a young man : light burthens, you know, terribly annoy young shoulders.”

“It was no light annoyance, Mr. Hanson, that has troubled you this day. A veteran of my profession ought to know something of the

expression that the different passions write upon the human face:—since you have been here, sir, I think I have read yours.”

“Oh, father!” exclaimed Mary; and turning to George, she gave him the tumbler, saying, in a low voice, “Pray, do not be offended.”

He took the glass, pressing the hand that offered it; and when she asked him whether it pleased him, he replied, “Excellent, but too weak,” and poured a quantity of brandy into the already strong mixture.

“I will sing to you,” said Mary, anxious to change the current of her father’s thoughts; and, taking forth her guitar, she warbled a simple ballad, with a sweetness of voice and intensity of expression which would have won plaudits from a crowded audience.

George gazed, and listened with admiration; and, excited by the brandy which he had drunk, and to which he was unaccustomed, he rapturously praised her performance, *and forgot Kate Leslie.*

Mr. Middleton, seated at the table, appeared to be entirely engrossed by the volume before

him; but when his young companions were unconscious of his scrutiny, his anxious eyes were fixed upon them.

“ You are tired, Mary,” said George, after she had sung him all his favourite songs; “ I will put down your guitar, and now let us talk about the benefit.”

Mr. Middleton laid aside his book, and, rising, interrupted his daughter, who was going to reply. “ Mary,” said he, “ I wish you would go to your room and read over your part again;” and Mary, though reluctantly, retired.

“ Is the subject that I touched upon disagreeable to you ?” inquired George, again replenishing his tumbler.

“ On the contrary, my daughter’s benefit, here and hereafter, is ever present to my thoughts.”

“ You are serious to-night, sir,” replied George; “ we will talk of it to-morrow.”

“ Strange, that *I* should be serious, is it not ?—*I*, the buffoon of the Danesford Theatre !”

“ I did not mean to offend you, but I fear you are displeased.”

“ It is time, young man, that we should understand each other.—I ask your pardon,—I address you too familiarly ; but it is your own fault,—*you* have sought *us*, *we* never sought *you* ; and when you deign to be our guest, there is but one language in which the father of Mary Middleton can address you : she has confided to me all that has passed between you !”

“ She has done right : I expected that she would do so,” was the reply which George uttered, scarcely knowing what he said.

“ It is a poor country actor who addresses you, and my daughter has been educated for the stage ; but it has not been your purpose—no, you have not dared to form a plan for her destruction, taking advantage of her situation ? Young man, speak !—you have *not* dared——”

“ You wrong me, sir,” George faltered.

“ I trust I have done so ; for, mark me, I would assassinate the man who robbed me of my child !”

“ Be calm, I entreat you,” said George.

“ Calm ! He who would glory in the seduction of Mary Middleton would laugh if you suggested to him the propriety of giving her father, the poor actor, the satisfaction of a gentleman. But in *your* countenance I read no deliberate guilt.”

“ My only object in seeking your acquaintance has been to do you service.”

The old man looked at him intently for a moment, and then said,

“ You must make allowances for one situated as I am. When a man of your rank deigns to associate with us, I dread his advances, for I cannot fathom his intentions ; yet I am painfully aware that my rough manners and my dread of a disgraceful suit may drive from my poor girl, in disgust, an honourable man, whose sole intention was to lay at her feet the offer of an honourable heart.—*Are you such a man ?*”

“ Is it possible you suspect me !” replied George, utterly bewildered by unwonted excitement and the novelty of his situation.

“ If you are not, leave my roof,—never let us see your face again. Forget us, sir—forget us, as *we* will endeavour to forget you; or, if you *do* remember us, let it be in some moment of reckless dissipation, when gazing with the eyes of a voluptuary on some poor girl who, for her subsistence, dances in the ballet, or sings in the chorus of a London theatre. You will think her an easy conquest; you will say, ‘ *She is only an actress.*’ At that moment I would have you think of *us*; and remember that *I* told you, none but a heartless coward would take advantage of a woman merely because she was unprotected and exposed to danger.”

“ Your daughter, sir, can never be so circumstanced.”

“ My daughter,” replied the old man, “ were I to die this night, would have nothing to depend upon but her talents. I am aware she has abilities; but her frame is delicate, and her feelings sensitive. Her abilities may win for her wealth and distinction; but I am not blind to the fact, that her de-

licacy and sensibility may so far incapacitate her for the exertion of her talents, as to cause her to fail. What then, let me ask you, is Mary's fate?—what, but to become one of the painted crowd who walk in a procession, or sing, and dance, and——Why do I talk of this! the possibility for ever haunts me, but I never spoke of it before.”

“ And why speak of it now ?” said George ;
“ why give way to so sad a foreboding ?”

“ Because your presence here alarms me. If she *be* doomed to tread the public stage, your attentions will unsettle her mind, and unfit her for the effort.”

“ What would you have me do ?”

“ Leave us now, and for ever,—now, ere my daughter returns to us.”

“ Impossible !” replied George, the vision of the fair girl with her guitar floating before his eyes.

“ You say it is impossible, and my daughter has repeated to me your professions of attachment. I am poor, and was never yet accused of presumption ; yet, sir, whatever your ex-

pectations may be, and however proud your connexions, I must tell you plainly, that you must speak to me frankly, as a son would speak to a father, or never see dear Mary's face again."

The actor sank back in his chair overcome with the violence of his emotion ; and George Hanson rose, and, seizing his hand, declared that his love for Mary was unbounded and most disinterested, and that without her he never could be happy.

In justice to Mr. Middleton, we must remark that he was not at all conscious of the extent of George's potations, nor of the effect which an indulgence to which he was unaccustomed had produced. He naturally heard his declaration with pride and pleasure ; and when Mary again joined them, George addressed her openly in the language of love, and kissed her cheek for the first time, unreprieved by her father.

A dim indistinct consciousness of the fatal error he was committing haunted George even while he pressed the hand of Mary ; but he

did not retract : he spoke of the necessity of concealing his engagement for a time ; and when he left them at a late hour, he was pressed to the heart of the old actor, and was permitted to embrace his child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oh, when it is too late
Thou wilt regret me ;
In vain thou 'lt strive to hate,
Or to forget me :
Thy love for me in vain
Thou 'lt strive to smother,
And ne'er wilt thou again
So love another !

Oh, when it is too late,
And I 'm forsaken,
Affection, *once* so great,
Will re-awaken :
And *then* thou wilt renounce
The spells around thee,
And sigh for ties that once
So fondly bound thee.

WHEN good Mrs. Podd departed in anger from the lodgings of Mr. George Hanson, slamming the street-door after her to denote her disapprobation, she hurried through the streets of Danesford, looking neither to the

right nor the left ; and as she went *pat-pat* along, many gazed after her, wondering how a woman so small, so old, and so out of the perpendicular, could contrive to get over the ground so fast.

“ There’s an end of that !” thought Mrs. Podd ; “ it’s all over now—he shan’t have her ! He does care for her, that’s evident, and I’m glad of it, for we’ll break his heart !” And on she went, the irritation of her mind accelerating her bodily speed.

“ And yet,” thought she again, having walked off a little of her excitement, “ he’s young—very young ; and young men *will* be young men, in spite of all that old women can preach ! I should be sorry *quite* to break his heart ; he ought to be miserable, and he shall ; but, after all, perhaps he may come back to us : for I can’t forget the time when I used to dance him on my knee ; I’ve tried to forget it, but I can’t ;—poor, dear, wicked boy !” And she stopped short, and took out her blue and white cotton pocket-handkerchief, and wiped her eyes, and then proceeded more slowly.

“Poor infatuated boy!” thought she, resuming her less angry cogitations; “one never can answer for anybody who gets among the play-actresses! But that can’t last—it *shan’t* last!” and she clenched her stick and shook it. At this moment her eyes were attracted by a large play-bill which a man had just pasted against the wall, and she paused for a moment to read it. Could she believe her eyes! Yes, it *was* all over now! for there was a public announcement of George’s performance for the benefit of Mr. Middleton, on which occasion his daughter was to make her first public appearance in Juliet. His name, indeed, was not mentioned; but having already heard him speak of the intended degradation, she could not doubt who was meant when she read, “The part of Romeo, by a gentleman amateur, who has kindly offered his services.”

Mrs. Podd stamped her high shoe three times on the pavement in violent wrath, and then walked on more rapidly than ever.

“That settles it!” said she aloud to herself, startling quiet people as she passed them.

“ We’ve done with him now ! *Offered his services* indeed ! oh, no doubt—pretty goings on ! An *amateur* ! I wonder what an *amateur* means ! —another name for a blackguard, I suppose. That ever he should live to be put in print an amateur on the walls of Danesford town ! This day week !—an *amateur* ! Surely his mother won’t rest in her grave ! *I* couldn’t—I know *I* couldn’t, if *I* were dead ; and I wish I were ! —oh, I wish I were, before those I love best come, one to sorrow, and one to shame !”

Uttering these broken exclamations, she reached the lane that led down to the village of Mapleton ; and in her present state of excitement, dreading a meeting with any of the members of the family at the Rectory, she sat down on a bank by the way-side, and rocking herself to and fro, gave vent to a torrent of tears.

Here she was soon interrupted by Mr. Leslie’s young assistant, with whom the reader has as yet been enabled to form but a slight acquaintance.

“ My good dame,” said he, “ what is the matter ? Are you ill ?”

Mrs. Podd shook her head, motioned impatiently with her stick, (as if to “marshal him the way that he was going,”) but did not remove her handkerchief from her eyes.

“I cannot leave you in this situation,” said Mr. Ibbotson. “Have you fallen down? You really ought to take care of yourself; you are too weak for long walks.”

“Weak! I am strong enough. The weakness of our sex is always the talk of you men; more shame for you when you trample on us!”

“Good gracious!” said the tutor, interpreting her literally, “you don’t mean that any man has ridden over you? Where are you hurt?”

“*Here!*” cried the old woman, putting her hand on her heart. “No one has ridden over me; I wish somebody would: there’s no comfort on this side the grave. It’s *here* I’m hurt, —*here!*”

“What *can* you be talking of!”

“Talking of!—the ingratitude of man,—base, abominable, unfeeling!”

“Surely,” thought Ibbotson, when she paused

in her tirade, actually wanting words to express the extent of her indignation,—“Surely old Podd *can't* be crossed in love!”

“I'll tell you what, Mr. Ibbotson,” said she, at last starting up,—“it is time to take a decided step.”

“Which way?”

“Which way!—*any way* but the way we have gone.”

“My good woman, how am I to comprehend your meaning, when I don't know whence you come?”

“Well, then, I'm glad I met you here,” replied Mrs. Podd; “for I believe you have good sound sense,—which is more than poor Mr. Leslie has, I fear.”

“Do you presume to speak thus of your master!”

“Presume!—and, pray, do you suppose anybody in the wide world loves the old man better than I do?—No, sir, not even his daughters; they love him in a different way, but not better. I knew him and served him when the mother of those two girls was alive; and for her

“Are you in earnest?”

“I am,—I heard him say it. Not that that much signifies *now*,—for a man who would do it would tell any lies; but I saw it *black-guarded* all over the town against the walls. He’s going to strut about on the boards of the public playhouse, which, I’m sure, must have risen originally from the devil’s own dominions!”

“You use very strong language to-day, Mrs. Podd; and you’re not quite right about your derivation,” said the tutor. “The *first* plays were sacred, and were called mysteries.”

“Then I’m sure there’s no mystery about the matter *now*, and they’re profane enough, in all conscience.”

“There’s much to be said for the drama, too,” replied Ibbotson, who never could resist exhibiting his little bit of knowledge. “We mustn’t forget Shakspeare; and then, you know, Terence, Euripides, Æschylus,—we mustn’t forget the ancients.”

“Bury the ancients!” cried Mrs. Podd impatiently: “I’m only anxious about a youth.”

“ Well, and what would you have me do ? ”

“ Go to old Leslie.—But no,—on second thoughts, I ’ll go myself ; I ’ve always had as much influence with him as anybody ; and if he won’t take care of his daughter’s happiness, why, I must make him.”

“ His daughter’s happiness ! ” exclaimed the tutor, changing colour. “ What has *that* to do with Mr. Hanson ? ”

“ Well, I do believe nobody has common sense in the house but myself ! ” replied the old woman ; “ and even I can’t keep my tongue quiet. Why, who can answer for Kate, when a handsome lad like that is always here, as George—as Mr. Hanson *used* to be.”

“ Kate,—Miss Katherine, I mean,—is so young.”

“ Oh ! you know nothing of the world,” interrupted Mrs. Podd : “ it is lucky I do. Here, give me your arm, for I ’m tired to death ! ” and leaning on Mr. Ibbotson’s arm, she proceeded slowly to the Rectory, and having reached the gate, abruptly left him to go in pursuit of Mr. Leslie. With him she

was closeted for a long time. His two daughters, who were sitting at work in the little drawing-room, wondered what could keep him so late in his study ; and at length Kate, who began to grow uneasy, threw aside her embroidery and went to seek him.

The room dignified by the appellation of Mr. Leslie's study was small, very simply furnished, and fitted up with a few books. The good clergyman's studious days had long been over, and this low, dull apartment had been the scene of his lonely hours of sad contemplation, and of the regrets of an inactive mind yielding to the inroads of apathy and despair.

There are some mourners who, in the first anguish of bereavement, shrink from consolation, as if to struggle against despair were an infidelity to the departed. Most men have some dear ties left on earth, some beings dependent on them for comfort and support, and for these they feel that exertion becomes a duty ; religion inculcates such a feeling, and God in his mercy strengthens the mind that makes the effort. But poor Mr. Leslie's heart was broken ;

“Have we any property belonging to George Hanson, Kate, besides what he left in his room?” inquired Mr. Leslie.

“To Mr. Hanson, sir!” exclaimed Kate, sitting down on the nearest chair, and clasping the hand of the old woman, who had immediately walked to her side.

“Yes,” proceeded Mr. Leslie, unconscious of the pain he inflicted; “I have written to him, and it is possible he may never return to us.”

Kate looked imploringly at her nurse for information, and the old woman said,

“Yes! and it was high time to write to him, —living away so long, and now going on the public stage!”

“His absence, I own, surprised me,” said Mr. Leslie; “and perhaps I was wrong not to interfere before: but I was not aware that his mother’s old friends had left Danesford. But, now that I know the truth, and the danger in which he is likely to involve himself, I have written to say that he must return immediately, or, should he fail to do so, his property will be

“ You have seen him, then ? ”

“ I have.”

“ If such, after seeing him, be your wish, I submit.”

“ Hark ! ” said Mrs. Podd aloud ; “ there is the bell for evening prayers. Miss Kate does not seem quite well, sir ; I think she had better go to her room.”

“ No, no ; I am better now,” replied Kate, rising ; and leaning on Mrs. Podd’s arm, she followed her father to the little school-room, where they were all accustomed to assemble for morning and evening prayers. “ I will pray for strength—for resignation,—and I will pray for *him* ; and you will, dear nurse, will you not ? Yes, we’ll pray for *him*,” whispered Kate as she walked through the narrow passage.

Mr. Ibbotson stood with his book open, ready to read the evening service. He turned an anxious glance towards Kate as she entered, and, apparently struck with her appearance, he started and changed colour. The boys were all in their places, and Jane was already waiting

for them. They all knelt down ; and poor Kate, instead of going to her accustomed place, fell on her knees by Mrs. Podd, and buried her face in her lap. Mr. Ibbotson then with a low and faltering voice read the prayers.

Kate Leslie raised her head but once, and then she looked towards the vacant place that in former days was occupied by George Hanson. At that moment, George, with a heated brain and a flushed cheek, was listening to the song of Mary Middleton.

Poor George had certainly been most unfortunate in the arrangements made by his parents for his future guidance. When Lord William Hanson died, all his originally small fortune had been deeply mortgaged, or had fallen into the clutches of usurious Jews. In case of Lady William's death he named a distant relation of her own, the sole surviving trustee of her marriage settlements, as custodian of her small income, authorising him to use his own discretion in fixing the amount of allowance to be made to George from time to time as his age increased. Now it afterwards

proved that this man, a cousin of Lady William's father, the Danesford apothecary and alderman, himself an extensive grocer, and by no means a man of business, except in his own particular business, had little or no discretion; or, perhaps, having a wife and a family, he did not want to trouble himself about other people's affairs. What George asked for, was, therefore, generally promptly granted during his minority, and when he came of age, Mr. Dibbs joyfully yielded up his trust, and, as he himself expressed it, washed his hands of the business. With regard to personal guardianship, Lord William named the boy's mother, and most particularly stated that it was his express desire that she should hereafter use her own unbiassed judgment in the choice of a guardian. Mr. Leslie therefore found himself in a most embarrassing predicament; he had no control over the young man's pecuniary affairs, and how, at his present age, was it possible for him to control his actions?

Had it not been for these most imperfect

CHAPTER XV.

Look at his grey hair,
Look at his wrinkled brow,
And think HE once was young and fair,
And full of hope as THOU.

“ You are a devilish lucky dog, Hanson !” said the Honourable Mr. Fitzville Fancourt, an intimate friend of the lispng Mr. Skinflint, and recently an inseparable of George Hanson’s ; “ yes, by Jove, you *are* a lucky fellow !”

“ Lucky !” replied George, pushing aside his late breakfast ; “ I wish *I* thought so.”

“ Why, what can you possibly have to complain of ?—a lovely girl is evidently dying for you.”

“ Ah, so *you* say ; but it does not follow that I am to believe it,” replied Hanson. “ And even were it true, marriage is a desperate act.”

“ Marriage !—And who talked of marriage,

be permitted. What ! marry an obscure, provincial, unknown, barn-door actress of all-work ! —Impossible !—Were it a leading London one, indeed, no matter how bad her character, there might be a certain *éclat* about it ; but a poor, sawney, respectable, thirty-shilling-a-week little woman, would never do. 'Pon my life, Hanson, I'm glad I knew it in time to warn you ; for, I give you my honour, not a soul would ever notice you again ;—I'd cut you dead, my dear fellow, I declare to you most solemnly."

"With such a wife, it is not probable that I should throw myself in your way."

"But I'm quite certain that you never have thought seriously of marriage. You like a little eccentricity, and you are laughing at me. —But you'll find that father of hers a queer subject to deal with."

"He is a most respectable man," replied George.

"Yes, so I'm told ;—great bore that ! You are sadly mixed up with dull, respectable people : — that Mapleton family was quite enough to kill you."

belonging to you—forwarded to your lodgings—as you will not again be received under my roof.’—Did ever anybody hear such a tirade !”

“ It was high time indeed,” said George, “ to leave his roof !” and he rang the bell.

“ He’ll rap your knuckles when you get back !” cried Fancourt.

The servant entered the room.

“ Is anybody waiting ?” inquired George, bursting with rage.

“ A little ragged boy, sir.”

“ I’ll write an answer,—bid him wait ;” and after the servant was gone, he added, “ I’ll merely order that everything I possess may instantly be sent here, as I have no intention of returning.”

“ Very proper that,” replied his guest, eagerly adding fuel to the fiery mood of George. “ It won’t do to admit that you are actually turned out of the parson’s house, hey ?”

“ Such is positively the fact, however,” replied George.

“ Hold ! don’t *you* write,—give *me* the pen—let me say you are obliged to go in a hurry

It was a great relief to him when his host proposed that they should take advantage of the fine spring morning, and spend the remainder of it in walking in the fields. One observation of the old man, however, startled him, for it reminded him of what others might say, or rather what others might *think*, of his theatrical associates.

“But, perhaps I am wrong, sir,” said Mr. Middleton; “and you will be ashamed to walk with an old actor.”

“That is not likely,” replied George in some confusion.

“Why, perhaps not; and, indeed, it would be a sad thing for Mary if her own husband were to be ashamed of her own father.”

The young man tried to laugh; but there was no concealing from himself the fact that he should be ashamed of his father-in-law. For the present, however, he consoled himself with the idea that their rural *tête-à-tête* would be put to the account of the approaching exhibition at the theatre—merely one of the many readings or private rehearsals of *Romeo*. He, therefore,

walked unembarrassed through the streets of Danesford by the side of old Middleton ; though he secretly rejoiced when they found themselves in the solitude of green lanes.

“ Yours, after all, must be a happy life,” said George, “ in spite of its anxieties.”

“ Happy if it lead to independence ; but you know not—you cannot imagine the misery of some who toil for the amusement of the public. Oh, how little does the spectator think, when the features smile and the pliant limb is exerted, how heavy the heart may be !”

“ You are alluding to a class far below the intellectual members of *your* profession,” replied George.

“ I am so ; and I once had an opportunity of witnessing a scene which deeply impressed me, and which I will venture to describe to you. Very early in life, indeed before I became an actor, I was induced to go abroad, in the hope of realising an independence, under the auspices of a female relative, who had united herself to a Belgian. I was disappointed, and was on my way to my na-

tive country, when, arriving at the frontier town of France, I met with an itinerant exhibitor whose sufferings will never be obliterated from my memory. If you will sit down by me on this bank, I will tell you my story in my own way."

But the tale that Mr. Middleton told shall be reserved for a separate chapter.

ples and gingerbread-nuts; the screaming female venders of the same, (the fairest of the fair!) the canvass portable ale-houses, with benches and tables, and smoking men in smock-frocks within, and flags flying without to tempt more customers;—all these had been the delight of my boyhood; not forgetting the thimble-rig, the fortune-teller, the merry-go-round, and the one show, with a big drum beat vigorously on the platform in front by an itinerant Mr. Merriman, and a young lady in gauze and spangles, with ostrich feathers, blue, red, green, and yellow, who walked up and down, that we might fully understand what a very charming person it was who intended to dance on the rope and stand upon her head at the top of a pole by-and-by, for the entertainment of those who were fortunate enough to be able to pay their twopences for admission into the interior of what was denominated ‘SAUNDERS’S PAVILION.’—Such being my early impressions of the scenery, machinery, dresses, and decorations of a fair, it may be supposed that I was not a little

the cheapest and the nastiest articles, I found trinkets of fine gold, Bréguet watches, and diamonds of the purest water; a tin trumpet, price two *sous*, close to a pair of brilliant earrings marked six thousand francs! Whether people ever really go and furnish their jewel-boxes at such a market, it is not in my power to say.

“ But it was at night that Lille Fair appeared to most advantage: even brilliants became more bright under the glare of lamps judiciously disposed; and the fragile *bijouterie* of France shone forth in their glass cases as temptingly as the more solid productions of Storr and Mortimer.

“ Having lounged along the line of shops until my curiosity was satisfied, my purse lightened, and my legs weary, I turned towards the upper part of the *Place*, where stood a range of exhibitions most tempting to eyes that had looked upon the world not quite so long as mine.

“ I passed by the wax-work, because I hate those cold, stiff, transparent, glassy-eyed imitations of mortality. I did not pay the con-

just a visit, because the last time I entered that sort of exhibition, intending of course to be one of the audience, the exhibitor thought proper to single me out and render me one of the performers, second only to himself. When he wanted a watch, he always asked for mine, for which I have an especial fondness, and never like to see it in any stranger's hands. Then all sorts of tricks were played with it; it flew, or seemed to fly, here, there, and everywhere; and though it was returned to me without any apparent damage, I have never had confidence in its movements since. Then my pocket-handkerchief was borrowed and exhibited, at a period, too, when I had a cold in my head: and when articles were missing, he always made it appear that I had secreted them. So I hurried by the booth of the "*cunning man*," and paused before that of the "*strong*" one.

"Now this same "*HERCULES*," for so was he designated, professed to raise enormous weights. This part of his exhibition had no charms for me; nor can I understand the enthusiasm with which people congregate to

see a fellow-creature shorten his life. Under some circumstances, when by taking prodigious leaps, unnaturally distorting his body, or walking up a single rope to a terrific height, he gives his audience *a chance* of seeing him *killed on the spot*, the attraction becomes doubly great. But horrors have no charms for me, and I was tempted into the strong man's booth by the announcement that he would give a living representation of the most admired statues of antiquity.

“ I was late, and when I entered, the exhibitor was standing on a pedestal in the attitude of Apollo. I was surprised to see a youth, apparently scarce one-and-twenty, formed certainly in the mould of a Hercules, but evidently too young to undertake with safety the astonishing feats of strength described in his *affiche*. Though wonderfully muscular, his limbs were graceful, his attitudes were free from vulgarity, and his costume, though necessarily adapted to the nature of his exhibition, was perfectly delicate. His symmetrical arms and his fine throat were bare. The expression

of his handsome countenance betrayed disquietude and anxiety ; but I supposed him merely anxious, as it was the first day of the fair, to make a favourable impression on the very scanty assembly. This end seemed to be attained, for they were tumultuous in their applause, especially when, having left his pedestal, he commenced that part of his task which, though little to my taste, had been eagerly expected by them.

“ The poor boy, for he really looked little more, proceeded to realise all the promises made in his printed bills. Prodigious were the weights he raised ; and some that it was utterly impossible for him to move from the earth, were placed *upon him* ; and though they did not *crush* him, his sufferings must have been acute, and he bore them without flinching. Large and muscular though his frame appeared, his fair countenance was that of a stripling ; light hair curled round his forehead, now bathed with the dews of over-exertion, and on his cheek there was either the hectic of ill health, or a spot of rouge, ill put

on, to imitate youth's roses. In every pause there was a short dry cough, never to be mistaken by one who has heard that fatal signal by his own fire-side: but he still proceeded with his task, though each new effort was more difficult and painful than the last.

“ At length but one feat remained to be performed, but it required more exertion and endurance than all the rest. His legs were to be fastened to an upright pillar, and when his body was in a horizontal position, all the weights which he had raised singly were to be supported by him in one accumulated mass.

“ I hastily rose to leave the booth ; but just as the exhibitor was preparing himself for the effort, a little boy ran to him on the stage and whispered something in his ear. The young man clasped his hands, kissed the child, and then looked wildly and wistfully on those around him ; and when the person who had assisted him prepared to put the fastenings on his feet, he started back, and I heard him say in a low voice,

again, and, turning from the glare and the revelry of the still busy fair, I walked along an almost deserted street which led towards the ramparts. As I proceeded slowly, thinking of the strained sinews of the poor fellow whose exertions I had just painfully witnessed, two figures approached me, a man and a little child; and though the figure of the former was closely enveloped in a dark mantle, I recognised the Hercules, and the boy who had interrupted his performance.

“ ‘ I don’t know what is the matter with me, Frederick,’ said he faintly : ‘ I am ill ; your bad news chilled me to the heart.’

“ ‘ I ’m very sorry, papa,’ replied the child :
‘ was I naughty to come?’

“ ‘ Naughty ! — no, dearest boy ; but we ought to be there, and—and—why is this ?— I cannot support myself.’

“ ‘ Lean on me,’ said the poor infant, who could scarcely have borne the weight of his father’s hand.

“ ‘ Let *me* assist you,’ said I, advancing ;
“ you are ill, exhausted : you are wrong to do so much ; you will suffer for it.’

“ ‘*I suffer!*’ replied the youth: ‘I care not for myself.—But you are a stranger—an Englishman: I cannot expect *you* to assist a poor mountebank.’

“ ‘Lean upon me,’ I replied; and, unable to proceed without assistance, he leant upon my shoulder.

“ We proceeded for some time in silence; but having reached a mean-looking house in an obscure street, he paused.

“ ‘This is my lodging,’ said he. ‘I thank you—I am better now;’ and relinquishing my support, he nearly fell to the earth.

“ ‘Go in with the child,’ I answered; ‘but pray admit me when I return, for I will bring you something that will revive you.’

“ He made no answer, and I left them to seek for some restoratives; and having procured what I wanted, I returned, and finding the door open, I ventured to enter.

“ Upon a wretched bed in one corner of the mean apartment lay what once must have been a beautiful young woman. Disease and want had wasted her to a mere skeleton, and death

was written legibly in her anxious, meagre countenance. On the floor by the bed lay on his face the strong man of the fair: the sight of his poor wife, (for such, notwithstanding his youth, she was,) fearfully changed since he went forth to exhibit himself for her sake, had entirely overcome him, and, while tears streamed from his eyes, his muscular frame was shaken with the sobs of anguish. The little child sat on the ground by his father, weeping bitterly.

“The dying woman alone appeared sensible of my presence; and, apologising for my intrusion, I briefly explained how much I had been interested by the young man, and how anxious I was to be of use to him.

“‘Alas!’ said she, ‘I fear no one can be of much use to him now;—I have been his ruin, and my death will be death to him. He is well born, sir, and highly bred;—*I* have made him what you saw him this night. Fool that he is, to love me still!’

“‘Compose yourself,’ I replied; ‘all may yet be well.’

“ ‘ All *might* be well, would he but survive me, and forget me ; but he will die,—I know it,—and we shall be buried in the same grave.’ ”

“ ‘ You said he was well born ; will not his relations aid you ?’ ”

“ ‘ You have never known misfortune, sir,’ said she bitterly ; ‘ you would otherwise have known that wealthy relatives, instead of *aiding* the unfortunate, are apt to turn over every leaf of his past life, to seek out a reason why they ought to desert him, and to sanction their assertion that he merited his doom.’ ”

“ ‘ No one feels the truth of what you say more keenly than myself. May I ask his error ?’ ”

“ ‘ A great one, sir, and one that, I own, deserved punishment,—but not the heartless desertion which he has experienced. He loved *me*, sir, and I was poor and friendless. Not that his *love* for me was his crime,—had it led to my seduction, his proud friends would scarce have blamed him ; but he married me,—before he was seventeen, and when I was a mere child myself, he married me,—and though they urged

him to renounce a marriage which they said might be proved illegal, he never would desert *me*, and so all have deserted *him*.'

" ' And why the exhibition that I this day witnessed ?'

" ' *Why!*—because I was starving—dying,—and I believe he is now dying too, partly from the effort, partly from the degradation !'

" ' Hush !' I whispered ; ' he is quiet now,—I think he is asleep. Take some of this nourishment ;—nay, consider how important it is that when he wakes, he should find you better.'

" Therese was struck with the truth of this, and took some of the refreshment I offered her ; but, with my consent, she gave a large portion to the little child.

" He ate eagerly for a moment ; and then we saw him divide what she had given him, and lay the largest portion aside.

" ' What are you about ?' said I gently ; ' cannot you eat it ?'

" ' Hush !' whispered the little fellow, with tears in his eyes, and pointing to the sleeping man : ' papa has had none, you know.'

“We did not speak for some moments, for we were touched by the child’s simple words.

“‘How old is the boy?’ I inquired at length.

“‘Four years old. His poor father is not yet two-and-twenty : he looks younger in face ; and as for his figure, you must not judge of that,—every muscle has now been unnaturally forced.’

“‘Hush ! he wakes.’

“And the Hercules began to move ; and, slowly and feebly raising himself from the ground, he sat up and looked wildly around him.

“‘Something nice for papa,’ cried the child ; and, running to him, it placed before him the little treasure it had saved.

“‘Frederick !—Ah ! I remember now,’ said he. ‘Therese—she is not—No, no, no,—she lives !’ and he rose and rushed into her arms.

“I knew that they had sufficient sustenance for that night, and softly, and without one word of adieu, I rose and left the house.

“I called the next day, and found Therese

in a deep sleep, or rather torpor, and her husband, who sat pale and motionless by her side, raised his finger to his lip as I entered. I took a seat at some distance from the bed, and silently watched the group,—the dying woman, her distracted husband, and the little boy, who, kneeling at his father's feet, held one of his hands, and buried his face in his lap.

“ At length the young man raised his head, and his eyes met mine. Slowly and hopelessly he shook his head, and, rising, walked over to the part of the room where I was sitting, followed by the child.

“ ‘ We need not fear disturbing her,’ said he ; ‘ she will soon slumber in the grave, without a dream, without a sorrow !’

“ ‘ Nay, hope for the best,’ I replied, taking his hand.

“ ‘ Perhaps that is the best for *her*,’ he cried : ‘ but for *me*, and for this poor boy—Oh, what will become of *him* !’

“ ‘ Alas ! I can do little,’ was my answer.

“ ‘ You !—*you* are a stranger,—you have given us your sympathy,—what could we expect more ? Besides, *you* have no wealth ?’

“ ‘ Indeed I have not.’

“ ‘ Oh, I knew it ! Had you been rich, instead of pitying me, you would have soon found out some early error, some past folly—*anything* as an excuse for not relieving us. But she still lives, and I can still support her.”

“ ‘ You will not attempt that painful exhibition to-night : you cannot endure the fatigue ; your hand now burns with fever.’

“ ‘ So much the better : that fever will support me. Look at these limbs, that I was once proud of,—their strength cannot be gone ; and if I earn enough for her and the boy, what can I require ? When the muscles shrink, ’twill be time for me to think of food.”

“ ‘ Do stay at home, papa,’ said the boy. ‘ I can’t do like you ; but I ’ll go and do my best, if it ’s to feed mamma.’

“ ‘ Poor boy !’ cried his father, kissing him.

“ ‘ Oh, I shan’t mind—I like jumping about, and I ’ll do my *very best*.’

“ We were interrupted by Therese, who, starting from her trance-like slumber, called for her husband and her boy ; and, knowing that I could do no good, and that my presence might

be felt as a restraint, I left the room without attracting her attention.

* * * *

“ That night the lamps again beamed from the booth of the Hercules. The populace, attracted by the favourable report of the few who had witnessed his exertions on the preceding evening, now thronged the space allotted for spectators; and leaving his poor Therese more feeble and exhausted than he had ever yet seen her, the strong man, after kissing again and again her cold and colourless lips, once more went forth to expose himself to public wonder. His limbs trembled and his temples throbbed whilst he again assumed the dress he was accustomed to wear; the very effort of fastening his sandals seemed too much for him; cold drops stood upon his forehead, and the beating of his pulse seemed audible: but the heavy weights were placed before him, and, hailed by shouts and acclamations, the strong man proceeded with his task.

* * * *

“ Poor Frederick knelt weeping by the corpse

of his mother ; but the orphan boy was the only mourner :—in the same hour that Therese ceased to breathe, her husband fell dead upon the stage : the iron weights rolled heavily from him to the feet of the spectators ; for the strong man had broken a blood-vessel.”

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CHAPTER XVII

Oh ! name him not, unless it be
In terms I shall not blush to hear :
Oh ! name him not ; though false to me,
Forget not he was once so dear.
Oh ! think of former happy days,
When none could breathe a dearer name ;
And if you can no longer praise,
Be silent, and forbear to blame.

“ Your story has deeply interested me,”
said George Hanson : “ do you know what be-
came of the boy ? ”

“ No ; I left Lille the following day : he
very probably was taken from the town by
some itinerant showman, and taught his poor
father’s trade. I never now see a man distort
his body, or risk his life upon a rope, that
I do not remember there may be some loved
being on a sick bed for whose support he
exerts himself, and over whom he will that

night keep watch. And is it not the same with us? We are spared their painful and dangerous feats; but is not the effort a severe one, when we feign buoyancy of spirits, and affect to laugh, though the heart is heavy? I therefore rejoice at the fair prospect my child has before her; for I do believe you love her, sir, and I hope you will make her happy."

"She *deserves* happiness," said George, withdrawing his eyes from the gaze of the old man, and stooping to pluck a flower at his feet.

"*Desert*, in this world, is small security for happiness. But I do rejoice in her being snatched from a life of public exertion; and gentle, unoffending, and affectionate as she is, I cannot believe that any man could find it in his heart to neglect or injure her."

"You cannot fear it," replied George.

"For my own part, I will not, if I can avoid it, owe anything to her elevation: it would be painful to me to hear it said, 'He has married his child to a wealthy man, who sup-

ports him.' I have determined to make one trial in the metropolis,—I am permitted to do so,—and should I be successful, a lucrative engagement will be the result. I have made every arrangement, and shall go to London almost immediately after my benefit. I can rely upon my child's discretion; and as my absence will be short, I shall leave her here until my return. Should my success lead to a permanent engagement in London, I shall return and fetch her; should I fail—I *must* return and plod on to my grave in the old way."

"You leave your daughter here? you may depend on my attention to her."

"On the contrary, I shall depend on her not receiving your visits until my return. I shall not be absent more than a week. When I return, I shall ask you to confide to me your plans for the future. You are very young, sir, and I may be blamed for encouraging you to unite yourself to my daughter; but *I* am old, and may soon be called away: no wonder, then, that I should cling to one who offers her protection. We must thoroughly understand each

other : I will sanction no long engagement.—
But enough of this for the present ; it is time
we should walk towards the town.”

They both rose, and slowly retraced their
steps ; and both were silent and abstracted.

Irritated with his former friends, and thrown
perpetually in the way of a girl so fascinating
as Mary Middleton, perhaps few young men
will wonder that he forgot the more retiring
and uncultivated charms of Kate. But Kate
had been his first love, and forgetfulness could
be only temporary : charmed as he might be
by the voice and accomplishments of the actress,
every act of his that tended to entangle him
with her, and to alienate him from Mapleton,
too surely led the way to future deep regret.

But no such thoughts now entered the mind
of the young amateur : Romeo's costume was
a matter of importance, the rehearsals occupied
much of his time, and all his other hours were
passed with the fascinating Juliet, who no
longer had any reason to conceal from him
the devoted affection with which he had in-
spired her. Hers was a first love, and she

never knew a second: he had already professed to love another, and having been once forsworn, who shall expect constancy from him!

It is not to be supposed that a young girl so situated, receiving the undisguised homage of a young man of Mr. Hanson's station, could escape scandal. The gossips of Danesford had long taken cognizance of their proceedings; and the shrugs and knowing looks of Mr. Skinflint, whenever his friend was mentioned, seemed to imply the worst. These imputations, however, by no means injured the approaching benefit. It is a singular fact, that the public appear sometimes to like a little mischief in public characters; and young ladies who ought to be supposed to know nothing of Mistress *This* and Miss *That*, except as the representatives of dramatic characters on the stage, now discuss their private demerits and their exceedingly uninteresting amours in a manner much too knowing.

Every place in the Danesford theatre was taken, for the evening of Mr. Middleton's benefit; and even the musicians were to be invisible,

that their places might be turned to account. In general, the parts of Romeo and Juliet are enacted by two good people who care no more for each other than Lady Capulet cares for the man at the back of the gallery; the ardent young Montague, perhaps, secretly considering his Juliet a dowdy, while the fair Capulet looks upon him as a vulgar stick of a man. But there was no want of reality in the loves of the two young and handsome representatives of the hero and heroine on this occasion; and there was an intensity in their passion, and therefore an illusion about their sorrows, that produced a very great impression on the spectators.

Every hand gave token of approbation, and every voice spoke in praise, save the hands and the voice of one solitary person in the pit,—and that was a member of the family at Mapleton Rectory.

The play-tickets given by George to Mrs. Podd on the evening of her visit to his lodgings had been carried home in her pocket, as evidences of his scarcely credible delinquency,

rather than as means by which she or any of the family might gain admission to the scene of his disgrace; and after being indignantly exhibited to poor Kate and her sister, they were thrown into the fireplace, there to be consumed the next time that a fire was lighted.

“ Though the weather is hot,” said she, “ I should like to have a blaze, for the sake of seeing those abominations burn !”

“ Well, for my part,” said Jane, “ I should like to see him act.”

“ Oh, Jane, do not say so !” replied Kate.

“ Why, if he is to act, my seeing him will not add to the mischief; and I do so love a play !”

“ I would just as soon go to see him hung !” said Mrs. Podd.

“ Oh ! now you are worse than Jane.” -

“ Worse than Jane, indeed ! worse than Jane !” cried Mrs. Podd, glad to vent her passion on somebody. “ Is that the way you speak to old age and infirmity, and to one who has nursed you !—and of your sister too ! though that I don’t so much mind, for she is a fool to wish to go.”

“I can make allowances for the natural curiosity of youth,” replied Kate quietly.

“Oh, you *can* make allowances for *her*!”

“Yes, and for *you too*, dear nurse; for your feelings are excited; you are mortified, hurt at the conduct of one you love;” and Kate kissed her affectionately.

“This is all stuff, my dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Podd, returning the kiss and wiping her eyes; “we ought to forget him.”

“Forget him if you can, nurse,” replied Kate; “and *I*—if I *cannot* forget, will think of him without resentment, and pray that he may be happy.”

“But I’m sure you don’t want to make use of those dirty tickets!” said the old woman, peering among the coals.

“Certainly not: even Jane, I’m sure, on consideration, will not wish to go.”

“I always know that your judgment, Kate, is better than mine.”

“Very well, then,—there let ’em burn in the first autumnal fire,” said Mrs. Podd; and wishing by active employment to change the

ruffled current of her ideas, she snatched up her stick, hurried away, and the *pat-pat* of her high shoe soon resounded on the paved floor of the kitchen.

Two days afterwards, one of those chilly days came which now and then remind us that we have made a mistake when we supposed summer was arrived. Mr. Leslie complained of the cold, and in the evening a bright cheerful fire blazed in the grate. Kate involuntarily sighed as she thought of the play-tickets;—not that she had any idea of using them, but she would have hoarded them up among other sad or pleasant records connected with her father's now alienated pupil. They had been sent by him as a present, his last present; one that under the circumstances might be deemed by some persons almost an insult; but then she acquitted him. "He may be thoughtless, careless, ungrateful," she said to herself; "but I will not believe that he would be guilty of an act of deliberate unkindness *to me*: no, he could not mean to insult me."

motion ; she therefore sought her out, really fearing that this restlessness of body betrayed disquietude of mind.

“ I am afraid you are ill,” said she.

“ Ill ! what should I be ill about ?—never was better in my life.”

“ I ’m glad to hear it, dear nurse,” replied Kate, intending to make no further remark on the subject.

“ Well, but what should make you think I was ill, I wonder ! I hate to be thought ill when I ’m perfectly well. Do I leave anything undone that I ’ve been accustomed to attend to ? or do I look more abominable than I used to do ?”

“ My dear Mrs. Podd,” said Kate, “ I am sorry if you are offended ; but, spite of your displeasure, I must now say that I ’m sure you are not well. When anybody so good-tempered as yourself becomes irritable about trifles, illness is always the cause.”

“ Irritable ! — am I ? — Yes, I know I ’m changed ; and I ’m sure if I ’m cross to you, I must be a very bad old woman. — I am a

But how unlucky you did not say so before the tickets were destroyed !”

Mrs. Podd *almost* blushed as she took from her pocket the paper that contained them.

“ Upon my word, I think you and I must change characters,” said Kate with a melancholy smile. “ You shall be the giddy girl, and I the stay-at-home matron.”

“ Don’t make sport of me, Kate, and don’t look at me in that sad sort of smiling way, for I can’t bear it; ’tis so unlike the way you used to smile. The crying face which I’ve now and then seen you have after saying a bad lesson was not near so melancholy as that smile.”

“ Do not talk to me thus if you mean me to smile at all,” said Kate : “ take the ticket you intend to use, and give me the rest. No one will know of your absence but Jane and myself: I’m sure I wish you a pleasant evening.”

“ Pleasant ! do you really suppose, Kate, I go there for pleasure ? I don’t know why I go,—I want to see him do that which I hate him for doing !—yet I must go.”

“ I do not think your going unnatural,

nurse ; you wish to see him *once* again, and you know it is not now probable that we shall ever meet him *here*."

"True,—that is it, I suppose : I am an old fool ; but don't let people know how foolish I am."

"I will sit up for you myself," said Kate.

"Oh, thank you ; and then, you know, I can tell you all about it,—that is—shall I ?"

"Not one word,—promise me that ; and let us now agree never to name him."

"Never ?"

"Dear nurse, *never* ;—that is, not till you have some intelligence to communicate of vital import to himself,—his success in life, his—his marriage ; or—or—should anything happen to him, let me feel certain that I shall be told by you. But, for *my* sake, never allude to the past."

"I promise," replied the old woman, shaking her head and turning up her eyes most piteously. And we have now said enough to explain how it came to pass that on the night of Mr. Middleton's benefit, old Mrs. Podd, in her

worst bonnet, wrapped up in an old cloak, and without any companion, was seated in the centre of the pit.

Every honied word uttered by the lovers in that most exquisite play was gall and wormwood to her heart. But that was not the worst; for, sitting where she did, surrounded by strangers, and those of not very refined delicacy, she heard all the scandalous rumours of Danesford respecting the young couple before her,—facts being, as is usual, so mingled with exaggeration, that George's conduct was not only painted in darker colours than it deserved, but cruel imputations, utterly unfounded, were cast upon the innocent and beautiful *débutante*. Mrs. Podd had no opportunity of sifting the remarks of her garrulous neighbours, taking what was truth, and rejecting what was falsehood. She therefore listened until the grey hairs on her head, by erecting themselves, threatened to dislodge her bonnet; and when the curtain again rose, and the culprits again stood before her, instead of joining in the applause of those around her, she could have

hissed them with all the angry venom of a serpent, or hurled at them oranges from the basket of the fruit-woman who stood near.

But Mrs. Podd retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid the commission of any rash, outrageous act. Before the conclusion of the tragedy, she bustled out of her place, unable to bear it one moment longer, and, squeezing herself over the laps of her neighbours, treading with her high shoe on many of their toes, she at last got out of the theatre and walked towards the quiet home of the Leslies.

Kate let her in : the old woman threw her arms round the girl's neck and burst into tears, and, without exchanging one word, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I 'll not believe Love's wreath will pain
The hands that weave it !
That when no summer flowers remain,
Love's wreath becomes a galling chain !
—I 'll not believe it.

I 'll not believe man wins a heart
To wound and grieve it !
That when sad tears unbidden start,
The once fond lover will depart !
—I 'll not believe it.

No sounds had reached George Hanson's ear but those of flattery and adulation ; and when the play was over, a few of his gay associates met at his lodgings to drink champagne and “ talk it all over.”

The extraordinary beauty of Mary Middleton was praised again and again ; and the good fortune of an admirer who was so evidently

admired was proclaimed over sparkling bumpers which George failed not to pledge.

Never yet thwarted from his very boyhood in a single desire, was George Hanson now to be controlled by the poor Rector of Mapleton? No: the unanimous decision of his associates was against such undue obedience on his part, and such presumptuous interference on the part of Mr. Leslie. Was he, then, to marry Mary Middleton, in opposition to the schoolmaster's wishes? No: they talked in a far different strain; and George dared not, at least in their presence, indulge even in a dream of such honourable intentions.

To what abyss, then, were mere casual companions, aided by his own selfish indulgence of every wild wish, leading him? He knew not, he cared not; he drove thought from him, as he had ever done when reflection became irksome. Thus far he had gone without premeditated evil: his abandonment of old friends, his dissipation with new associates—his neglect of one to whom he had appeared devoted, and his sudden devotion to another, were all the

acts of a youth accustomed to yield to every new impulse. *We*, who can only detail facts, and who have not the power of bringing in extenuation what are indescribable; the quick feelings, the warm affections, the wish to please, the ready smile when he had the power of gratifying others, the ready tear when he was conscious of having given offence; —*we* may appear too lenient to his errors. But to know such a boy, and see in his noble nature every latent seed of kindness and goodness, and yet to know that all has been perverted—ruined by indulgence, (or rather by *self-indulgence* in the parent, which has led to neglect of the child :) this indeed is terrible; and when the natural good qualities of the youth have won our best affections, may we not mourn—ay, may we not “sit down and weep,” when we see the fair garden overrun with rank weeds, and know that their poisonous exhalations must in a very short period exterminate every pure flower that once promised to adorn it!

“Come, Hanthon, my boy, another glath!”

cried Mr. Skinflint, who on this evening had wished to play what he called "*Mercuthio*." But that part having been rescued by the good sense of old Middleton, and put into the hands of a *real* actor, he had represented "*Count dy Parith*,"—"Another bumper to the health of the incomparable Mary."

The glasses were all replenished, and, as is the custom among such revellers, the name of a pure and beautiful girl was bandied from lip to lip, as an excuse for further indulgence in wine, when infinitely too much had been drunk already.

"Why, George, my good fellow," said one, draining his glass, "we shall never see you now, I suppose you will hang out for ever at old Middleton's lodgings."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing," replied Hanson: "that will be forbidden ground to me after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow! why so?" inquired Fancourt.

"Because Middleton is going to London: he is to act at one of the great London

theatres, and if successfully, he will be engaged there."

"Very likely; but what has that to do with your not being admitted at his lodgings?"

"Come, tell uth all about it."

"Oh, merely that the old man has made it a point with me that his daughter will receive no visits during his absence."

"Excellent! the cheese is to be left on the shelf, but the mouse is desired not to touch it!" said one of George's new friends.

"Oh, that abthurd old Mithter Middleton!" cried Skinflint, laughing.

"But, I say, Skinflint!" replied the other; "what will the mouse do when the cat's away?"

"Oh, the poor innothent mouthe! only look at him!"

"Really," said George, "this nonsense is all very well among ourselves; but it must not go further: Miss Middleton's name is not to be trifled with."

"Certainly not," replied Fancourt; adding

in a whisper, "By-and-by we'll talk the matter over; for if Middleton is really going to the metropolis, you ought, as that fellow hinted, to ——"

"Hush!" replied George: "they will soon leave us; more of that when they are gone."

The revellers soon departed, and in the grey dawn of a fine spring morning, George Hanson was left in his apartments with a heated brain, and no better Mentor by his side than the Honourable Fitzville Fancourt,—dizzy with flattery and applause, with temptation thrown in his path, and, spite of many natural good qualities, with no steady principles, and no proper sense of religion to restrain him.

There are few men who cannot remember being at some period of early life associated with some gay unprincipled companion like Mr. Fancourt, whose manners were sufficiently attractive to gloss over, for a short period, the errors which in one less polished would have been disgusting. The most innocent may for a moment be dazzled; but the maxims of

good parents will not be forgotten—the high principles early inculcated will assert their due influence, and the profligate associate will be tolerated with reluctance, while his power of doing injury will be neutralised. But, in such hands, what can we hope for the youth whose remembrance of a mother is coupled with no maxim of morality, and no precept of religion? Idleness, ignorance, and self-indulgence, form the soil in which, when the seeds of vice are sown, a rank abundant harvest must arise.

A rake from his very boyhood, and an adept in every petty dissipation which Danesford could offer, he listened with delight to the details of a metropolitan career from one who seemed to know its most secret haunts. The idea of marrying *any one* at his early age was spoken of with ridicule, not on account of the imprudence of early marriages, but because matrimony was an inconvenient incumbrance to a youth of spirit: but marrying an unknown, poor, provincial actress, no matter what might be her beauty or her worth,

or to what degree her affections might have been already won by assiduous attentions, was an absurdity not for a moment to be contemplated.

Ere the two friends separated, the hardened libertine had startled even George with his suggestions.

Let no parent accuse Mr. Middleton of culpable neglect in leaving an only daughter unprotected in his lodgings at Danesford while he went to attend to the duties of his profession in London. The rich man with ease could avoid doing so ; but the actor could neither afford to take his child with him, nor to place her under female protection during his absence. He felt implicit confidence in the rectitude of her conduct, and left her without anxiety about her welfare, certain that until his return even her accepted lover would not gain admission under his roof.

Women of a higher rank are guarded by a hundred delicate refinements and observances unattainable by the poor. The male protector, the carriage, or the servant, is ever within call ; they are never left unguarded, and they

are blamed if they stir without attendance. With all these incalculable advantages, such women have fallen victims to the persevering ingenuity of a lover. But the country actress, ere distinction in her profession has given her wealth and consequence, may be left a lonely lodger in some disreputable neighbourhood: if no father or brother be at hand, has she servants to attend her to the theatre,—has she a carriage to convey her home at hours which are necessarily late? If such women do fall, let us remember only their trials and temptations, and turn with greater admiration to those so situated who have passed the ordeal without even incurring suspicion!

Mr. Middleton was gone; and when George Hanson presented himself at the door of his lodgings to inquire after Mary, the woman of the house, obedient to the instructions given her, stated that Mary was well and grateful for his attention, but that until her father's return she must decline receiving his visits.

Opposition never yet deterred George from attempting the attainment of any desired ob-

ject: he persisted in calling, and was always courteously repulsed with the same excuse. Mr. Fancourt was astonished at what he called the persevering prudery of the little actress; but he assured George of his conviction that it was all artifice, to entangle him more closely in her toils, and to inveigle him into matrimony on her father's return.

"It is the way with them all!" said he: "the father is an old-stager, and this demure seclusion of the girl during his absence is a mere stage-trick."

"By heavens!" cried George, "I have not seen her for three days, and I swear to you I love her even better than I was aware of."

"Just the object Miss Middleton had in view! She knew that barring the door against you, would only make you the more anxious to climb in at the window."

"And in at the window I must climb if I can obtain admission in no other way."

"No, no, I bar *that*: there'll be a devil of a row to very little purpose. They'll send for the police, and we may be vastly annoyed."

“When I talk of entering the window by force, I protest it is with no evil intent: I only want to see her, to converse with her,—in fact, to assure myself that she really loves me.”

“Love you! to be sure she does, to desperation;—she would run away with you to-morrow.”

“You are very much mistaken, Fancourt; she would do no such thing.”

“Wouldn’t she?” replied Fancourt. “Well, then, it would be a great charity to make her happy against her will. I think I’ll run away with her myself;—you’ll wait shilly-shally till old Middleton’s return.”

“You are jesting, I know,” said George; “but you must not jest on such a subject. What would you have me do?—I must obtain an interview with her.”

“And so you shall;—that is, if you’ll leave it all to me. When is old Sock-and-buskin expected home again?”

“In five days.”

“In three I promise you an interview. We

will take an early dinner together on Friday, and that evening you shall meet her again."

— On the evening of the day on which this conversation occurred, old Mrs. Hawley, Mr. Middleton's landlady, had the honour of drinking tea with Mr. Silverthorn, Mr. Fancourt's confidential valet.

Mrs. Hawley was in every sense of the word an old actress;—born, not actually on the stage, but one night after her mother had performed *Little Pickle*, sung three songs, and danced a hornpipe! She was, as soon as she could toddle, led in as a young prince to be murdered, or a babe in a wood; and then, at four years of age, she used to hang in the air at the end of a wire, in imitated nakedness, with a blue gauze tunic, doing an angel or a fairy. When scarce in her teens, she did tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, all *equally well*; and she continued this profuse exhibition of her talents until, at the ripe age of sixty, going down a trap-door one night as one of the furies, she was precipitated to the earth and incapacitated for further theatrical exertion.

Being no longer able to act herself, she then let lodgings to actors and actresses;—she sold oranges and ginger-pop in the theatre, and was generally considered a very good sort of motherly woman.

With Mrs. Hawley, Mr. Middleton and his daughter held no communication beyond the common civilities which pass at street-doors, or on staircases between lodging-house keepers and lodgers, when the former are tolerably obliging and honest, and the latter quiet and unobjectionable. The idea of leaving Miss Middleton under the care of the woman of the house never entered the old man's thoughts. When Mr. Hanson or any other visitors called, she was told what reason to give for the young lady's declining to receive them; but had Mary been the sole inhabitant of the house, he would have thought her as safe as in the lodgings of Mrs. Hawley. We may also add, that, holding no intercourse with her, he considered his daughter as safe and independent in her house as she would have been in a house of his own.

There was nothing remarkable in a woman of Mrs. Hawley's habits and character drinking, first her tea, and then her brandy-and-water, with Mr. Silverthorn; but that a woman of her age should have been sought out to enjoy such an indulgence was surprising.

Protracted and confidential was their *tête-à-tête*; and when she was thoroughly in her cups (of tea or something else), the valet ventured to hint certain schemes, which elicited from her chaste lips most violent objections. But conditions were then named — bribes were offered; and when the iniquitous pair separated that night, a thoroughly good understanding (or rather, an abominably-bad one,) existed between them.

Hanson, by the advice of his friend Mr. Fancourt, discontinued his calls; but Mrs. Hawley, for reasons best known to herself, contrived to let Mary understand that the poor young gentleman who had called so often was dangerously ill, and confined to his bed. She, however, daily laid upon the table of Mary's little sitting-room a beautiful bouquet,

with Mr. George Hanson's kind regards. Was it not natural that she should cherish her flowers with the fondest care?—and having acknowledged her affection for him, could she do less than weep when she heard of his illness?

CHAPTER XIX.

Write on the sand when the tide is low,
Seek the spot when the waters flow ;
Whisper a name when the storm is heard,
Pause that echo may catch the word :
If what you wrote on the sand should last,
If echo is heard mid the tempest's blast,—
Then believe, and not *till then*,
There is truth in the vows of men !

Throw a rose on the stream at morn,
Watch at eve for the flower's return ;
Drop in the ocean a golden grain,
Hope 'twill shine on the shore again :
If the rose you again behold,
If you gaze on your grain of gold,—
Then believe, and not *till then*,
There is truth in the vows of men !

MR. MIDDLETON'S *début* in London was highly successful, and he returned that night to his hotel with the plaudits of a crowded audience ringing in his ears.

“At least,” thought the old man, “Mr. Hanson will not now be the son-in-law of an obscure country actor! Such as my profession is, I have attained eminence in it; nor shall I be beholden to him for my daily bread.”

The next morning he wrote a letter to his daughter, full of exultation at his success, and saying that, after one more performance, having finally arranged his engagement with the manager, he should return to Danesford on the following Tuesday.

But Mary received no letter; and, in addition to her anxiety about her lover's health, she now began to dread that some accident had befallen her father. She had determined not to quit the house during his absence, for had she met George, how could she have prevented his joining her? She therefore paced her small apartment, too much agitated and too anxious to read, or employ herself in any of her usual occupations.

It was on Saturday that her father's letter ought to have reached her: he had named that as the day on which she would hear from

him ; and, aware of his usual regularity, her heart sank within her when, having heard the postman at the door, she called to her landlady to ask if he had brought her a letter, and was informed that Mrs. Hawley herself was the only person who had received one.

Mary could not account for her father's silence ; nor had she the common consolation or the common vent for the ill-humour of a disappointed correspondent. She could not scold him for his apparent negligence, for she knew not where to address a letter for him. With a heavy heart she arranged her fresh flowers in a vase on her table, and repeated to herself her favourite scenes in "Romeo and Juliet." Alas ! poor girl ! if others were plotting against thee, most unconsciously wert thou removing from thy fond heart its few and frail defences.

Sunday brought no letter ; and knowing that on the following day there was no post from London, her anxiety became intense. To whom could she apply for advice ? Her thoughts flew to George Hanson : but she had promised her father that she would hold

no intercourse with him, and at last she made up her mind to wait for Tuesday's post. If she then received no intelligence from her parent, she felt that she should be justified in confiding her apprehensions to the man whose addresses that parent had sanctioned, and to take such steps as his better judgment and knowledge of the world might suggest.

How dreadful is anxiety about the fate of an absent friend, when the lonely hours of a long day are passed in the dwelling which the presence of that friend has often rendered cheerful! The vacant chair, the desk laid aside, or the closed volume, all give to the chamber an air of desolation.

Mary rose on Monday after a sleepless night, and heavy indeed was her heart when she entered her sitting-room at reflecting that a day and a night must pass ere a letter could reach her. But though she could expect no letter, was it not possible that intelligence might arrive through some other channel, — that her father himself might return, or be brought back to her suffering from some accident?

Let no one think such terrors are exaggerated: to those who are unaccustomed to be separated, parting ever brings a dread of something that we dare not scrutinize; and when the expected letter comes not, the firmest nerves will tremble.

Every carriage that passed through the street that day attracted her to the window; every knock at the door startled, and made her run and open her door and listen. Towards evening her alarm increased; and when Mrs. Hawley entered her room to beg she would not "give way," but take a bit of something for her dinner, she declared she could not eat, and requested to be left alone. Again she paced her narrow apartment; and taking an early moss-rose from her bouquet, she gazed on it, as if from thence she expected comfort.

"Surely," thought she, "were there any bad news to communicate about himself, my father, to spare me a shock, would write to Mr. Hanson, or cause him to be written to, that he might break it to me gently. Nothing

serious *can* be the matter; and yet—why no letter!”

The dark hours were again coming on, —those hours so dreaded by the anxious! While daylight lasts, there are sounds in the street; and though to look forth from the window has brought us disappointment again and again, still we *can* gratify our eager curiosity: and there is some relief even in the impulse of expectation, though at each failure we sink back into deeper gloom. But night had now closed in; and by the light of one small candle, Mary Middleton still walked up and down the room, or paused to listen to some distant sound.

There was a loud knock; she started, and for a moment was unable to move: but, hearing the door opened and voices in the passage, she rushed to the top of the small staircase, and eagerly listened.

“I will speak to the young lady myself,” said Mrs. Hawley; and Mary heard the landlady ascending the stairs.

It was *not* her father, then; but Mrs. Haw-

ley had evidently something to communicate, she should now know the worst; and as these thoughts rapidly passed through her mind, her strength forsook her, and, like a coward, she shrank back into the room; sank down in a chair, and dreaded the approach of the woman. All that long day she had watched and prayed for intelligence of her father; yet now she would have given worlds to have been permitted to rest without information, save that which she might receive the next morning in a letter written by his own dear hand!

Mrs. Hawley entered the apartment with a demure countenance and a curtsey, but seemed in some confusion, as if uncertain how she should word the communication which she intended to make. Mary sat motionless, with her eyes fixed on her, and could not articulate a word.

“Don’t be frightened, miss,” said the landlady.

“My father! tell me the worst,” Mary at length murmured.

“I’m sure I’d do anything for you, miss.”

“ Tell me the truth !”

“ The truth !” replied the woman.

“ I assure you,” said Mary, starting up, and taking the landlady’s two hands in her own,—“ I assure you I can bear it : anything is better than suspense. Have you heard of him ?”

“ *I*, Miss ! No ; but——”

“ Somebody *has* heard, then,—probably Mr. Hanson. I entreat you to tell me, or to get me the information instantly.”

“ Oh, if you would but *see* Mr. Hanson, Miss, all might be well !”

“ See him ! certainly—anybody : but perhaps *you* know—has anything happened ?”

“ I fear there is something wrong.”

“ You are desired to conceal the truth from me,—I see it.”

“ *I* conceal the truth !” stammered the woman.

“ Then there is no alternative,” exclaimed Mary ; “ I must see Mr. Hanson,—I should be wrong now to hesitate ; but he is ill—unable to come here.”

“ There is a person below who will take you to him.”

"Let me go at once, then," cried Mary, hurrying towards the door.

"You were forgetting your bonnet and shawl," said Mrs. Hawley, following and assisting her to put them on.

"True !" said Mary ; "you are right—thank you." With rapid steps she walked from the house by the side of a man whose face she had not seen : another followed close behind her.

"I know not whither I am going," said she : "you must direct me."

"Mr. Hanson is expecting you, madam," replied a voice unknown to her.

After passing through two or three streets, dark as the night was, she knew that they had left the houses, for she heard the breeze murmuring through the young leaves of the trees. In an instant a powerful arm encircled her waist and raised her from the ground ; she was hurried into a carriage, the door was closed, and as it whirled rapidly away, she heard the voice of George Hanson and fell senseless in his arms.

CHAPTER XX.

“ Be comforted !”

 You say with kind intent ;
Nor would *I* shed
Tears for the *dead*,
 The *pure*, the innocent !
But am I wrong
 In being thus subdued,
Whose love most strong,
And tried so long,
 Met base ingratitude ?
Could sorrow kill,
 You would not see me here :
But, 'gainst my will,
I linger still,
 With none my path to cheer.

GAILY beamed the morning sun on the tranquil village of Mapleton ; and Kate Leslie, as she sat at work at one of the open windows of the Rectory, looked forth on the budding flowers and trees, listened to the songs of the

birds, and felt her sad heart relieved from some of its depression.

“ ’Tis wicked to repine,” thought she, “ while surrounded by so much that I ought to be most grateful for! a tranquil happy home, a father, sister, friends who love me; and shall I be dissatisfied because *one* hope—one, too, that I was wrong to indulge, has ended in disappointment? No! I will not pain the hearts of those around me by wearing a face of gloom: I have been foolish, culpable; oh God, forgive and strengthen me!”

“ Come, Kate!” cried Jane, entering the room prepared for a walk; “ I am going to walk with my father,—will you come with us?”

“ I am busy,” replied Kate: “ but where are you going?”

“ Your favourite walk, the path by the rivulet.”

“ No, not there: you will find me here when you return.”

“ Why, it used to be your favourite walk!”

“ So it was, Jane,” said Kate with a slight

sigh ; but looking up cheerfully, she added, " and so it shall be again ; but I want to finish what I am about."

Through the green tendrils that shaded her window, Kate soon saw her father pass down the little garden leaning on Jane's arm : she watched them until they were concealed by the trees, and then she resumed her work.

" Why does my father always look to Jane for support," thought Kate, " instead of to me, his eldest girl ? why, but because he has been more accustomed to find her ready when he wanted assistance ! I have been devoting my thoughts, my affections, to another ; and well do I deserve the mortification which my own folly has occasioned ! Even now, I think of him too much. Is it a crime to think of him ? No ! for I have driven from my heart every selfish feeling of love or of resentment ; and surely to be anxious for the reformation—nay, for the salvation—of one who was once so dear to us all, cannot be criminal. Oh ! if hereafter I may but hear of his welfare, of his respectability, I shall be content. And I *shall* live

to hear it ! the natural good qualities of his heart cannot be wholly perverted. I have myself been in error ; but I will atone for the past, as George will one day do,—I will be a more devoted daughter !” And with this reflection Kate rose and laid aside her work, with the intention of following her father and her sister.

With more cheerfulness than she had felt for many weeks, she ran to her room to prepare herself for her ramble ; when having done so, in closing a drawer, the neglected play-tickets, and several trifling presents given her by George in days gone by, caught her attention, and gathering them together, she brought them back with her into the drawing-room, with the intention of folding them up carefully and putting them by in her own little desk.

“ I do not wish to see them daily,” thought she,—“ it is better that I should not : but there can be no harm in preserving them, and hereafter there will be no harm, no danger, in beholding them. Poor fellow ! were every young

man to have his boyish vows of love remembered and quoted as proofs of ingratitude and want of feeling, who would escape censure? 'Tis *I*, too, alone have been to blame; I forgive him—nay, I have nothing to forgive. Poor George! he will prosper yet; he will be good, and he will be happy!"

She laid her little treasures on the table, wiped away a few weak tears, and proceeded to open her desk. At that moment she heard a noise in the passage below; a loud and angry voice inquiring for her father, and Mrs. Podd, first with civility, and then passionately, declaring that he was not at home.

Kate ran to the stair-head to inquire whether, if the gentleman's business was urgent, she could be of any use in her father's absence; and at the same moment, with a vehement declaration that he would not leave the house till Mr. Leslie's return, the stranger ascended the stairs and entered the room.

He was a man of about sixty years of age, stoutly made, and of a florid complexion. His whole frame shook with violent agitation,

his dress was disordered, his eyes wild and bloodshot, and his grey hair uncombed hung scantily around his high bald forehead. His right hand grasped a large stick, on which he leant for support; but so insufficient was it in his present exhausted state, that, on entering the apartment, he sank back against the wall, and stared at Kate for a moment with a wild unmeaning glare, which she could not but attribute to madness. Much alarmed, Kate stood before him undecided what she ought to do: at length, with a faltering voice, she inquired whether she could be of any use to him.

“*Her form! her height—and a voice almost as sweet!*” exclaimed the old man; “but not like Mary! oh, no, no!”

“You seem agitated, sir: what can I offer you?”

“Only tell me, is he here? put him into my power, the dastard!”

“I fear, sir, you are ill: I can be of no use.”

“Pardon me, I know not what I say,—but

I am a wretched father, and you must forgive me!—Is he here?”

“If your child is a pupil of my father's, I can assure you that all are well,” said Kate.

“A pupil of *your* father's! not for the world should child of mine be pupil to your father, if you be Mr. Leslie's daughter! I never knew but one of his pupils; and he is a scoundrel—a mean unprincipled scoundrel! a liar! a thief—the worst of thieves!—Is he here?”

“I really know not what you mean, nor who you are, sir,” said Kate, recalled to her self-possession by the old man's violence, which alarmed her less than the maniac gaze with which he had at first silently regarded her.

“You know me not? true—I will tell you who I am,” replied he. “I am an actor, and my name is Middleton.”

“Middleton!” exclaimed Kate; and overcome by terror, she sank into a chair.

“You have heard that name before, it seems?”

“I have, sir.”

"Most creditable, truly ! under the roof of a clergyman the pupil was permitted to boast of his intrigues !"

"Sir, you wrong my father, and you forget what is due to me, when you speak thus ; but in your present state of excitement I can forgive anything. Pray sit down, and for God's sake tell me what has happened !"

"Is it possible you do not know ? It *may* be. But answer me one question—Is the villain here ?"

"You have not named him," said Kate, trembling, and dreading his reply.

"Hanson — George Hanson !" replied the old man between his teeth, hatred and revenge glaring in every feature.

"He—is—not here."

"Not here ! But how am I to believe you ?"

"Most solemnly I declare to you he is not here ; nor have we seen him here for many weeks.

"Oh God ! what am I to do !" cried Middleton, beating his forehead with his clenched

fist. "Mary ! my child, lost, lost ! and where am I to seek thee !"

Kate rose from her seat and firmly and deliberately walked towards him ; with both her hands she grasped one of his, and pressing it, she said in a low voice, " You have not told me what has happened ; do not deem me unfeeling when I ask you to tell me all, for—for I would wish to hear it while we are alone : it concerns your daughter !"

" You know it, then ?"

" We have long suspected his attachment, and it was that which estranged him from us : my father could not sanction the marriage ; but when opposition is fruitless, he will not withhold his pardon. If they *are* married," she whispered, turning deadly pale, " tell me at once, tell me while no one is by ; it is better I should know it at once."

" Married !" replied the agonised father,—
" married ! oh no, there has been no marriage ! why not wait for my return had he meant to marry her ?"

" What—what then ?"

"And I see you did not know—the seducer is not here."

Kate, with a wild cry, utterly unconscious of the action, threw her arms round the old actor's neck and fell insensible on his breast.

In the heaviest afflictions, the unexpected necessity of affording help or comfort to another will rouse us from our apathy; and Mr. Middleton, who was but a moment before engrossed by his own anguish, now exerted himself to restore the girl who so unexpectedly sympathised with him in his distress.

Mrs. Podd soon appeared with restoratives, and it was not long before Kate opened her eyes and with a convulsive sob looked round upon her two assiduous attendants. She extended her hand to Mr. Middleton, who pressed it with kindness.

"Forgive me," she said faintly: "at such a moment I would not for the world have troubled you. I could have borne anything but this!—his marriage with your daughter—oh, I would have prayed for blessings on

them both ! But his guilt ! an outrage on the laws of God and man ! I cannot bear it !”

“ *You*, then, had been deserted when he first sought Mary ! Oh, had I known that !”

“ Tell me,” cried Kate, starting up, “ can nothing now be done ? is it too late ? may they not be found ? He would hear reason, I think he would, *from me*, and I will urge his marriage with all the little influence I possess : oh, to bring that about, I would sacrifice my life !”

“ You’d not prevail with one so base and selfish.”

“ I should *not* despair, had I the opportunity of making the attempt. You know not his early disadvantages, his mother’s selfish folly : oh, had she taught him there was a God, he would have obeyed God’s commandments !”

“ Even could your words prevail,” replied Mr. Middleton, “ we know not where to seek him.”

“ When did they go ?”

“ On Monday evening.”

"Oh, George!" cried Kate, passionately clasping her hands, "why did my poor father forbid your return! Had you prayed with us, as you used to do, on that fatal night, you would not have gone forth to commit such a crime!"

"They have been absent fifteen hours, and of course every precaution has been adopted to elude pursuit."

"True," replied Kate, sitting down the image of despair, "I am helpless, hopeless, and I cannot aid you."

"You should rejoice rather than lament," said the old man; "you have perchance escaped a snare. Think of *my* child, a girl young, pure, happy as yourself! think of her fate—an outcast—scorned—degraded—the mistress of a wretch who cannot love her, and who will ere long spurn her from him!" He covered his face with his hands and wept.

"It is true!" said Kate: "had I been unprotected, such might have been *my* fate! My God, I thank thee!—left to my own guidance, I had been weak indeed!" And she

fell upon her knees and poured forth her silent thanksgivings.

As soon as Kate no longer required her services, Mrs. Podd, light of foot but heavy of heart, had hurried along the path by the rivulet, to summon Mr. Leslie and to tell the disgraceful story. The schoolmaster was overpowered—paralysed by the intelligence, and uttering incoherent exclamations, he hastened to the house. Kate rose at their entrance, and embraced her sister; but Mr. Middleton, his hands still covering his face, sat motionless.

In vain they tried to rouse him from his insensibility. But Kate, who bathed his wrinkled forehead and pressed her finger on his pulse, declared he was not dead; and with some difficulty a person was found who rode off at speed to Danesford to summon medical assistance.

For hours Kate watched indefatigably by his side—by him who was the father of the girl for whom her first and only lover had deserted her! “He has no child to nurse;

him now," thought she: "I will take the vacant place."

After being bled profusely, animation slowly returned; but he lay upon a bed at the Rectory unconscious where he was, and addressing his gentle and assiduous attendant as if she had indeed been Mary.

For many weeks it was found impossible to subdue the brain-fever with which he had been attacked; and when at length it gradually abated, health in some degree returned to the body, but not sense to the mind. He still talked to Kate as if she had been his Mary, and seemed utterly unconscious of his misfortune.

If mental alienation can ever be regarded without horror, it is when it veils from the unfortunate the nature and extent of their misfortune.

Who that saw the old man smiling on Kate Leslie, and calling her his darling, could wish to raise the veil, and show him that he had been nursed by a stranger, while his own poor child had been the forced paramour of a ruffian!

KATE LESLIE:

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Mr. Leslie never recovered the shock, his already shattered nerves became daily weaker, and when at length Mr. Middleton was removed from the Rectory to an asylum in the neighbourhood, Kate, released from her attendance on one sick bed, was summoned to another.

In a country town, so daring and lawless an act as that which George Hanson had committed was long and loudly censured, and there were not wanting many who threw the blame on Mr. Leslie's laxity of discipline.

The culprit in some measure escaped the imputation of a forcible abduction, for several persons were ready to swear that they had heard Miss Middleton ask those about her to take her to Mr. Hanson: and thus over her innocent intentions a foul stain of imputed guilt had been cast.

Such was the devastation George Hanson spread around him when he committed an act which compromised his own happiness!

CHAPTER XXI.

She never blamed him—never !
But received him when he came
With a welcome kind as ever,
And she *tried* to look the same.
But vainly she dissembled ;
For whene'er she tried to smile,
A tear unbidden trembled
In her blue eye all the while.

WELL perhaps had it been for Mary Middleton had she, like her father, remained unconscious of her situation. But after a brief cessation of sense, she began to revive, and the first sounds that broke upon her ear were words of endearment from him who had professed to be her friend, and who had proved her betrayer.

Wildly she shrank from him, and receded into the corner of the carriage, burying her face in her hands, and sobbing with the aban-

donment of a child deprived of what it most loved. But suddenly she started and seemed to rouse herself; and then, after looking wildly round her, she cast herself on her knees before George Hanson, prostrate on the rough rug which lay at the foot of the hired carriage, and looking imploringly in his face, she cried, "My father! tell me of my father!—if you are a man, deceive me not in this!"

"He is well, dearest Mary," said George, embracing her, though she shrank from him with dismay. "You need not be under the slightest apprehension about your father."

"How know you that?" said Mary.

"I—I *do* know it, no matter how."

"Has any letter been received from him?"

"Yes: he is well."

"Then that letter was addressed to me!"

George was silent, but endeavoured to renew his endearments.

"That letter was intercepted!" exclaimed Mary; and she fell at the bottom of the carriage like a lifeless body.

George Hanson looked helplessly down on

the ruin he had wrought, and tried in vain to raise her and restore animation. She seemed as one dead; and there were a few dreadful moments when he gazed on her white lips, and chafed her cold hands, uncertain whether he were a murderer. But on went the carriage, the horses again and again were changed, and day began to dawn. At length her rigid limbs seemed to relax, and George succeeded in placing her on the seat beside him; her eyes gradually opened, and with a convulsive shivering she turned and looked on her companion.

“It is, then, no dream!” she cried.

“You are with one who loves you,” said George.

“Loves me!” she replied with a look of scorn: “and is it *thus* men prove their love?”

“Nay, Mary, say not so: I thought that you loved *me*.”

“And so I did—and do—yes, even now—I will not deny it; and to save you from an error or from a degradation, I would have died. How have you proved your vaunted

love for *me* ? you have plunged me from peace and respectability into misery and disgrace !” ...

“ How can you thus accuse me, Mary, when to promote your welfare will be the happiness of my life !”

“ The happiness of your life, George Hanson ! Ah, no ! your life will be prolonged, and may perchance be happy, when I am cold in the grave. With the man who really loved me I could look forward to an old age of tranquil happiness ; but men show not true affection in a deed like this. You were determined to snatch me from my father’s arms—you have done it—I am lost, I am helpless—I cannot retrace the step that I have taken, and I know myself for life your slave—your slave, unless released by your desertion,—and *that*, I feel, I could not bear. Oh, George Hanson ! is it *nothing* to possess the devoted love of a pure heart ? I gave it you not unsought ; and having wooed and won it, is it a thing to disregard ? You are young, almost as young as myself ; you cannot yet be hardened in sinful ways ; and if I am your

first love, George, as you are mine, oh, cast me not down from self esteem, from your esteem, from hope, from comfort, from religion! I shall not dare to pray when I am guilty; I shall lose every virtue, every grace that won your admiration; and you will cease to love me, when you can no longer respect me. Think of the first innocent feelings of your first love, and cast bad wishes from your soul!"

George leant back in the carriage, his right hand shading his eyes, and he *did* think of the innocent dawn of his first love, for, with a bitter pang, he thought of Kate Leslie, and remembered that between himself and one so innocent he had placed an insurmountable barrier. But such recollections boded no good to the poor fugitive who now sat by his side. She was *not* the first love of his heart; her beauty had charmed his fancy, while she shared with him the plaudits of a crowd, and eloquently answered the sweet impassioned language which he, as her dramatic lover, had spoken with a tenderness so like

reality, he had fancied himself exclusively attached to her. Most innocently had Mary been the cause of the estrangement between George and Kate Leslie; she was even ignorant of her rival's existence. But now George was driven by her distress to turn from the illusions of passion to the darker realities and inevitable results of the step he had taken; and whilst his heart acknowledged that the being it really loved was far away and would learn to hate him when she heard his crime, he felt that he had united himself to one whose smiles and beauty had been to him her sole attractions; and as he beheld her anguish, he could not but reflect that it must be long before he could expect smiles or endearments from her: he had himself driven away the very charms which had allured him!

What, then, was to be his lot?—tears, reproaches, and perpetual gloom! George was not so hardened in guilt as to think of deserting her; he shrank from this vision of the

future, and endeavoured to restore her to calmness, if not to cheerfulness.

"Nay, Mary," said he, "do not give way to sad thoughts. Think of all our mutual assurances of attachment: I have said that I love you, and do you doubt that I shall be kind to you?"

"I am unchanged, George," she replied; "but are you so? or if unchanged, are you what I supposed you, and what you endeavoured to appear? I thought you a friend: are you not a foe—a deadly foe, the worst—the most deceitful? For myself I care little now, for, having dispelled the illusion, were you to stab me at this moment, I should make small struggle for my life, for that life must be miserable: but my father—when I think of the poor old man, and know what he will suffer when he hears that his child is taken away, and no marriage! Oh, sir, I shall go mad!—for my father's sake, make me your wife!"

"Dearest Mary," answered George, "why

this agitation? why do you doubt my intentions? why ——”

“Do not attempt to deceive me,” interrupted Mary. “There was no opposition to our union, no obstacle whatever: alas! my poor father was only too proud—too happy to receive you. It is not for marriage that the poor actor’s child is stolen away in his absence!”

“You know not what opposition my friends may have offered to our union.”

“You would have spoken of their disapprobation: but still—it *may* be so—and I will try to believe it: but, oh, to-morrow—nay, this day—for this must be the dawn of morning which steals upon us—this day at the earliest hour such a rite can be performed; make me your wife, and rescue me from the degradation which must otherwise be my lot.”

“We are on our way to Scotland, Mary,” replied George, evading a distinct reply.

“To Scotland! Is it, then, your intention that we shall be united there? If so, write to

my father at the first town we come to, and distinctly state that such is your design."

Where so desperate an act of duplicity has been practised, it is not to be supposed that George Hanson would hesitate to write a letter to Mr. Middleton, which was approved and partly dictated by his daughter, but, though she saw it sealed and directed, it never was forwarded to its supposed destination. They, however, proceeded on their way to Scotland, and the poor girl's mind was partially calmed by the promise of a marriage at Gretna Green.

But no blacksmith was engaged to unite the fugitives. The Honourable Mr. Fitzville Fancourt had a shooting-lodge in the Highlands, and had most considerately offered it to his friend and pupil.

When Mary Middleton could no longer conceal from herself the humiliating truth, she sank into a state of spiritless, hopeless, uncomplaining apathy. She loved him; but it was as the spaniel clings to the foot that has spurned and the hand that has beaten it,—

not as woman *can* love the being who appreciates and cherishes her.

She uttered no complaint, for she knew complaint would be useless; she asked for nothing, for she was aware that the only boon she craved, MARRIAGE, would, on some pretence, from time to time be denied her. There are some women so situated who are said to wean the affections of their false friends from them by incessant and wearying complaints. Such was not Mary; she "pined in thought."

'Tis true, she had no smiles to welcome him home, and no laugh, such as she had of old in her poor father's dwelling, to make glad the dwelling of her lover. But she did her best to please; and when he gave her a kind word or gentle look, (and after a brief period such words and looks were rare,) she shed grateful tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh this world of ours,
With the path that leads to death,
And the thinly-scatter'd flow'rs,
And the cold—cold ice beneath !
And the warm hearts we have met
But to lose them and to mourn,
And the ever-sad regret
For what never can return !
Oh this world of shame and sin,
This weary world of ours !
The canker worm is at work within
The fairest of its flow'rs !
Think of earthly treasure
As a thing that cannot last ;
Judge of *future* pleasure
By the false joy of the *past* :
Thou wilt learn how to disdain
All that mortals covet most ;
Slow to grasp what thou mayst gain,
Slow to mourn what thou hast lost.
Oh this world of shame and sin,
This weary world of ours !
The canker worm is at work within
The fairest of its flow'rs !

How rarely after the lapse of one brief year
can we revisit a favourite scene and find all

as we left it ! The same woods and waters, the same dwellings, and perhaps the same dwellers, may be there ; but shall we again behold the same happy faces ? But extend the period of absence ; say that *five* years have flown away ; and then, if you have held no communication with the absent, with what anxious misgivings, what sad forebodings, will you retrace the path that leads you to their threshold !

Five years !—in the retrospect they are as nothing, and to the youthful how little in anticipation ! yet what changes may not five years bring ! The child of ten, at fifteen will be the bold schoolboy, or the girl just ripening into the woman. Add five years to the age of the young bride, will the bridegroom still gaze on her with that fond smile ? death may have snatched him from her, or some cold premeditated separation worse than that death causes ; for both live, and two are miserable instead of one ! Or say Time treads on flowers : still five years will have brought a change,—a thoughtful serious brow, the ma-

tron's step ; but if, mingled with the laugh of loving children, she still hears the husband's voice of affection, happy indeed has been the past, and she has little cause to dread the future.

The old ; those who in age have health and youthful spirits, who "*wear so well*" that they excite our wonder ; five years *must* change them, and *may* snatch them from us.

Were we to sit calmly down, and deliberately make a list of all the changes and chances which the last five years have brought us, registering the names of those whom death has snatched away, or of those who have fallen from us, changed by their own prosperity, or scared by our adversity ; chilling to our hearts would be the page that we had written.

But were it possible that any human hand could trace coming events ; the dangers, the anxieties, the disappointments, and the losses of five future years ; who could look upon that register and wish to live ?

Five years may bring to the beauty the grey hair and the wrinkle ! to love, indiffer-

ence ; to friendship alienation ; to thoughtless mirth, lifeweariness and gloom ; to blooming youth, decay ; to green old age, infirmity.

Yet, returning to a place which we have only left for that seemingly brief period, how little do we anticipate such changes, and how appalling is it to behold them !

Five years ! None know better than ourselves the ruin that may be wrought in such a lapse of time ! — the prospects of early life utterly blasted, and the falling off of the rabble we once reckoned on the list of our friends ! The veil that hides the future from our eyes is indeed given in mercy : we have contended with — nay, we have surmounted difficulties which, had they been *foreseen*, must have crushed our health or our intellect !

But what is there in the retrospection ? Contempt for the false ; gratitude and deep love for the faithful ; and for ourselves, *EXPERIENCE*, which perchance has made us wiser and better.

Five years have passed away since we last

looked upon the tranquil Rectory of Mapleton, and, conscious of the many changes which may have taken place in that period, we linger in the green lane that leads down to the village, and pause to listen to some old familiar sounds. The church-clock is telling us the hours as it used to do when Kate and Jane Leslie were playful children, and George Hanson their innocent companion! That tinkling sheep-bell, how well do we know it!—and the bark of that dog, is it not the same we used to hear from this same spot,—one of the gay pupils' favourites keeping watch at Mr. Leslie's garden-gate?

Yes; the same sounds are here to welcome us, and they almost give us confidence to go forward with a certainty of finding all whom we used to value.

And does not every object that the eye rests upon remain unchanged? 'Tis again the early spring-time, and the trees and flowers are preparing for their summer festival. There is the green bank, on which sat old Mrs. Podd when Mr. Ibbotson surprised her in tears:—it

is as green as ever ! Who would suppose that five winters have in succession robbed it of primroses and covered it with snow ! Not a violet is missing, not a blade of grass withered, to whisper a warning that we may find sad changes where we go !

We do not miss a tree in yonder copse ; and if there *be* a change, 'tis one that tells of vigour, not decay ; it is the growth of some young saplings, which now rise, proudly emulating the loftier boughs that used to shade us long ago.

The rivulet,—that bright perpetual babbler !—which must be regarded with intense interest by one who remembers that it is among the very few things which was seen by our ancestors wandering between its banks,—remains unchanged for us, and will, if unmolested, flow with the same brightness and the same melody for our children's children ;—the rivulet still trickles through the valley, kissing the long tendrils of the willow-trees that droop to be saluted, and telling no tales of the lovers who within the last five years have rambled

on the pathway by its side — fondly as George Haason, confidingly as Kate Leslie !

Nothing as yet betokens change ; and we will venture on towards the gate of the Rectory. There stands the unpretending mansion : the smoke rises from the chimney, telling of comfort and competence within ; the walls are covered with their flowering creepers, and a casement is open, at which we almost fancy we can see a bright and cheerful face, smiling its welcome as of old. And, hark ! it is no illusion ; — far off, in the well-known playground, we hear the murmur of young voices, the shout of excitement, the merry laugh of joy ! We will hesitate no longer ; we will ring at the gate, and ask boldly for the Leslies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We must follow where they lead!
We must follow them with speed
Upon that unknown path—from which
Once enter'd, none recede!
We must follow those
Who now repose—
Too early snatch'd away,
And some who saw life's latest close
In age and in decay :
We must follow—we must follow—
For the ground we tread is hollow !
We must follow on the unknown path,—
How early—who shall say ?

UNCHANGED indeed was the village of Mapleton; and the Rectory, the simple church, and the noisy playground, gave no indication of a lapse of years; but another rector went about doing good in the little hamlet, and another schoolmaster superintended the education of another race of boys. None bearing

the name of Leslie were dwellers in that habitation ; and he who wished to seek the former rector in his place of repose, was led to an unpretending tomb beneath the yew-tree in the churchyard. There, four years before, had he been laid in the cold grave, while his two orphan children had wept in silence as they heard the earth fall heavily on his coffin.

There has always been to us something more than commonly painful in the death of a poor country clergyman whose income depended principally, if not wholly, on his very moderate stipend. If he was a husband and the father of a family, it was not probable that out of his small resources he could save much for that evil day when he should be snatched from his wife or children :—and if he could lay by nothing, or too little to produce an income for their support, how melancholy is the situation of his widow or his orphans !

The loss of one so dear must be sufficient to overpower them ; but, in addition to their bereavement, how dreadful must it be, in the very hour of mourning, to go forth for ever

from the dwelling endeared by old associations, giving up the favourite garden and the dear haunts of childhood to a stranger!—and this must be done when 'tis too probable that they lack the means to secure for themselves the home and the comforts to which, as gentlewomen, they have been accustomed.

In Mr. Leslie's case, however, the school had enabled him to lay by just sufficient to rescue his two girls from actual dependance. Their home, indeed, was now very different to that they had lived in from infancy, for it was one of the simple cottages of the village; but, good taste directing the willing hand of the rural carpenter, and a rich profusion of the gayest and the sweetest flowers, had rendered that humble dwelling an object which no wanderer was likely to pass without pausing to admire its unpretending beauty.

And there, four years after their father's death, we now find Kate and her sister Jane, living with one—shall we say servant? no—with one kind friend; and that friend was Mistress Podd.

The garb of mourning had long been thrown aside; and though the memory of their parent was fondly cherished by both, to the cheek of one at least of the fair girls had returned the rose of health and the expression of cheerfulness. But one was still pale, and sad, and thoughtful; and mingled with her filial regrets was another grief, *of which she never spoke.*

Kate Leslie but once in her life had met with such a being as George Hanson. Circumstanced as she had been, living out of society, in a country village, she had never had an opportunity of comparing with him other young men of equal or of superior pretensions. To her there had been but one George Hanson in her little world; and to forget him, or the bright anticipations that were once connected with him, was impossible.

She was now left, without one relation and with few friends, sole guardian of her sister; who, though but one year younger, had ever been accustomed to look to her for advice and protection. As long as Mrs. Podd lived, she felt a sort of security in the old woman's

presence and companionship: but, at her advanced age, she could not be expected long to remain with her; and indeed, were her life prolonged, infirmities might render her more an embarrassment than a comfort; and were she gone, or even bedridden, how lonely and unprotected would be their situation! both under five-and-twenty, and without resources to enable them to have servants to minister to their comfort or security.

“Could I see one of you married!” was Mrs. Podd’s perpetual remark: but was it likely, in so secluded a village, without fortune or connexions, that they should find admirers?

It is no less true than strange, that the want of what the world calls “*opportunities*” very often does not prevent girls having what the same excellent world is pleased to denominate “*eligible offers*.”

We have seen actually “*beautiful and accomplished*” girls, in the best society, visiting every watering-place in its own particular season, and always “*in town*” when operas and Almack’s and drawing-rooms were at their ze-

niths yet who never married. They have sung, and they have danced, and they have flirted; but they have not found husbands. On the other hand, girls living in seclusion, with every disadvantage, meet with men who woo them, and win them, and love them, and cherish them. The truth is this: The beauty, with her accomplishments, goes to the fashionable market with a very high notion of her own value. In the first blush of her fashion, a titled or very wealthy partner is generally to be found. But a partner in a quadrille is not necessarily a partner for life; and years flit away, and the bloom fades, and she who began with titles is spoilt for such establishments as can be offered by the country squire or the clergyman. Long live such old maids! say we; they deserve their doom.

“Could I but see one of you married!” was still the burthen of old Podd’s song.

“Nothing can be more unlikely,” said Kate.

“Well, I don’t know that: Jane is very pretty, though she has not *your* beauty.”

“My beauty!—oh, you jest!”

“Not I, Miss Kate, not I: and I tell you, I do think *somebody* thinks seriously of your sister.”

“Of course I know to whom you allude,” replied Kate: “but you must not suppose that every man who pays her attention seriously intends to ask her to be his wife.”

“Now do come here!” cried Mrs. Podd: “look at them walking together!—they are coming from the path by the rivulet in the valley.”

“I see them,” replied Kate, turning away with a deep sigh: “but their walking together in that path is no proof of anything, dear nurse, but—but a fancy, that *may* pass away!”

“Oh, dear me! I know what you are thinking of. Ah! well—but just come and look at them now: how earnestly he speaks, and how she blushes!”

“Indeed, nurse! then it is time I should forbid her rambles.”

“Nay, nay, not in a hurry; give the fish a chance of a nibble, and perhaps we may catch him,” said the old woman, trotting away to re-

ceive Jane. She soon returned with the fair object of her solicitude, who leant upon the arm of the young Rector of Mapleton.

“Good-b’ye, Jane!” said Mr. Morton: “will you be ready at twelve to-morrow?”

Jane blushed, suddenly found out that the strings of her cloak were entangled, and became exceedingly busy.

“I think, Jane, you will not be able to walk with Mr. Morton to-morrow,” said Kate gravely.

“Oh, never mind, Mr. Morton,” said old Mrs. Podd: “I’ll take a turn with you hereabouts, if you won’t go far; for I want particularly to speak to you.”

“I shall be here at twelve,” replied the rector, laughing; and shaking Jane’s hand affectionately, and nodding to the others, he departed.

“I wonder, Kate, what objection you can have to my walking with Mr. Morton,” said Jane pettishly: “you don’t know how lovely the walk by the rivulet is at this time of the year.”

“ Oh, yes, I do, Jane,” replied Kate ; “ and so well do I know that walk, dearest sister, that I would not have you go there too often with one who appreciates its beauties, as Frank Morton does,—unless, Jane, you are quite sure of your own indifference to him, or of his serious intentions towards you.”

“ She is quite right, Miss Jane,” said Mrs. Podd : “ I could fancy it was your poor mother talking to you.”

“ And so could I,” replied Jane, going to Kate and embracing her. “ Forgive me, if I have seemed wilful, but—but Mr. Morton has proposed to me, Kate. What ought I to say ?”

“ I thank God for it, Jane !” exclaimed Kate with warmth. “ You love him, and he will take you to our old home : you are indeed a fortunate girl ! When you left that dear Rectory, you never could have expected to return to it again. Mr. Morton is an estimable man ; and if you can love him, I can conceive no greater happiness than dwelling with him in the home of our childhood, so near the last resting-place of our father.”

"If I can love him, Kate! How can you say that! I know you think him unpolished, —perhaps vulgar; but you know not his excellent qualities."

"I meant not to offend you, dear girl," replied Kate: "believe me, I should be the last person to wish to see you the bride of one with refined manners and a depraved mind. No, Jane; you have chosen well, and may you be happy!"

"And now that Jane is gone away to cry about her happiness," said Mrs. Podd, "may I ask you, Kate, whether you never mean to make a worthy man happy?"

"I, dear nurse!" replied Kate. "Oh, no, no, I am a predestined old maid."

"You're no such thing. I hate old maids."

"You, dear nurse! you hate old maids!"

"Yes; and why not? Do you suppose I should like any pie the better because I had had a finger in it? Oh, no; there's no self-love about me, be sure: and, though I don't mean to say that I'm not in some degree an exception to the general rule, I assert that old maids are disagreeable."

“Not *all*, surely, Mrs. Podd: and even were it so, it is a misfortune, not a fault,—therefore not to be cast in their teeth. Young women cannot sally forth and make proposals to what they may consider eligible matches—they must wait to be wooed; and if nobody comes wooing, how are *they* to blame?”

“*You* at all events cannot say *that*,” replied Mrs. Podd: “it is not for want of a suitor that *you* remain single.”

“And would you seriously have me accept Mr. Ibbotson?” exclaimed Kate, sitting down disconsolately and looking at her friend.

“And why not?—you have known him all your life, and yet he is not old—not more than thirty-one,—and he has loved you so long, and he’s such an excellent man!”

“I believe he is; but—but so unlike—that is, he is not the sort of person——Oh! nurse, spare me: you know what I mean, but dare not utter!”

“I *do* know what you mean, dearest Kate. But, contrast him with whom you please, is not the comparison favourable to him? He’s

not a man of fashion, certainly ; but, for my part, I've had enough of men of fashion ; and if his manner is not refined, there's an honest goodness about his heart, Kate, that makes amends for all."

" I know you only do him justice ; but it is in vain. Never speak on this subject again.— I can never love him ; you cannot, therefore, wish me to marry him ;—he could not wish it."

" Well, I've nothing more to say," replied Mrs. Podd ; " but, were I you, I should not feel comfortable at making a poor gentleman look so miserable as he does."

Kate, to avoid further discussion, went to her own chamber without making any reply ; and Mrs. Podd, looking after her with a fond and anxious glance, shook her head, turned up her eyes, and then went *pat-pat* away to look after their very inconsiderable household affairs.

Mr. Morton, the present Rector of Mapleton, had continued to receive pupils ; but his school was less limited than that of the late Mr. Leslie. He had erected a building for their ac-

commodation at the back of the Rectory, and he had now at least fifty scholars under his care. Mr. Ibbotson was still retained in the capacity of usher ; and while the rector himself was openly paying his addresses to the youngest Miss Leslie, Mr. Ibbotson, more humble, but not less devoted, was pining in secret for the eldest, whose charms had won his heart at least six years ago, and whose hand, even now that she was poor and unprotected, he dared not solicit. In one respect Mr. Ibbotson was greatly changed, and for the better. He was no longer the exhibitor of small acquirements on small occasions. A few years' experience had cured him of his pedantry ; and, knowing much more than he used to do, he made less display of knowledge. His eccentricity of manner had departed,—the kindness of his heart was unchanged.

Mrs. Podd was but little altered. She was less upright, perhaps, and had less activity of body ; but her mind was as active and her heart as warm as ever. There are some people who are said never to grow old : such was not

Mrs. Peck's happy case, for she had become
 old and partially decrepit (owing to her lame-
 ness) earlier than most women ; but she seemed
 never to get beyond a certain point. Sixteen
 years have elapsed since she was introduced to
 the reader as a little, lame old body, and she
 might then have passed for any age between
 fifty and seventy : the same may be said of
 her now. She never had been known to men-
 tion her age ; and whether it was vanity, or a
 delight in mystifying the curious, we know not,
 but no artifice had ever yet inveigled her into
 betraying the important secret.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Come dwell with me,
And our home shall be
A pleasant cot
In a tranquil spot,
With a distant view of the changing sea :
My cottage is a happy scene,
The sheltering boughs seem evergreen,
The streamlet, as it flows along,
Is murmuring a fairy song !
Then dwell with me !

FRANK MORTON'S wooing was not likely to be unsuccessful. He was in the situation which moderate people call "well to do in the world ;" and he was attached to a portionless orphan, who had no reason to conceal her preference for him.

There was no necessity for those inexplicable delays in which the more wealthy find them-

selves involved ; nor for those voluminous tautological settlements, which, if made by a lawyer who wishes to mystify his clients, may prove anything rather than a security for either party. Frank Morton was a younger son, whose eldest brother had but a small patrimony to expect : his profession, therefore, and the rod which he wielded, were all he had to look to. He was an independent man, but could settle neither his rectory nor his rod on his fair bride. He could not, however, fail to be considered, in a worldly sense, an excellent match for Jane Leslie ; and as he loved her devotedly, and was regarded with esteem and affection by all his parishioners, and even by the dirty little schoolboys who trembled at his frown, Kate had every reason to rejoice in the fair prospect of happiness which lay before her sister.

The important question, as Jane stated, had been already “ popped ;” and though no definitive reply had been uttered, the expression which young Morton saw upon her blushing downcast countenance was far from being un-

satisfactory. To Kate he was referred for the sanction which there was now no parent to bestow ; and when frankly and affectionately she thanked him for the preference he had shown to her sister, no parent could more earnestly have implored him to be through life her kind, considerate, and indulgent friend, or could more devoutly have prayed for the prosperity of both.

The walks by the well-known rivulet were continued without interruption, the happy day was fixed, and all the preparations customary on such occasions were carried on with zeal and activity both at the Rectory and the cottage.

The reader may remember that Mrs. Podd in our last chapter made a sort of assignation with Jane's lover ; and when he arrived at the hour he had named, he found the old woman bonneted and shawled, waiting for him crutch in hand ready to fulfil her threat of accompanying him in his walk.

“ Here I am !” said she ; “ and you are not

to think of any other person, if you please, until I have been attended to."

"But Jane is no doubt expecting me," he replied.

"Then she must wait until I release you. Come along ! you need not fear a long ramble, for I'm not so active as I used to be ; but I want to talk to you by ourselves, and out of hearing : so come this way." And off she went with her accustomed up-and-down motion, leading the way until she came to a quiet secluded spot, where she seated herself, and cried, "Now sit you there, and listen to me."

The young parson did as he was desired, and Mrs. Podd again addressed him.

"I know that it is presumption in a person in my situation to take this liberty, Mr. Morton ; but, though I am a servant, I have never been one of those heartless mercenaries who live with people just so long as no opportunity offers for their *bettering themselves*, as they call it, forming no attachment for those whose bread they eat, and changing and chopping about

just like spaniels, licking the hand of a new master."

"Many servants are what you describe," said Mr. Morton; "but the superiors are often to blame."

"That may be; but I have been no such servant. I lived with the mother of those two girls; and now one of them's going to be married, I've lived long enough."

"Don't say that," replied her young companion, kindly taking her hand. "You are regarded as a friend, not as a servant, and they cannot do without you."

"Oh yes, they'll do very well—What an old fool I am to cry!—Jane has told me of your kind intentions towards Miss Kate, and I honour you for them."

"I trust she will reside with us," said Mr. Morton.

"That is what I mean. The proposal does you credit, young man, and of course she will gladly accede to it."

"I hope there can be no doubt of that; and do not imagine that *you* have been overlooked

in this arrangement. Kate, I am sure, would not be separated from you ; and were that not the case, I know my wife would be miserable without you. You are to have your old room, and be our housekeeper."

"Do you really mean it?" exclaimed Mrs. Podd, crying, not *bitterly*, but with the sweet consciousness of being loved and appreciated by those to whom she had devoted her life,—
"do you *really* mean it?"

"I do indeed," replied the rector.

"And Jane, dear Jane suggested this to you?"

"It was Jane's proposal, certainly ; but I had, I assure you, myself formed a similar plan."

"I believe you, and I thank you with all my heart ; and I thank God who has given my sweet Jane such a husband, — for he who is kind to a poor old woman like me must have a kind heart. I am *very, very* grateful ; but it cannot be — no : when Jane is married, Kate shall go and live with her ; and then my work will all be done, and I 'll creep into some corner and die."

"Do not talk thus,—I shall think I have offended you."

"No, no; but I can't go and live at the Rectory again. I should be ordering about me, and arranging everything, as I used to do in my poor old master's time; and that won't do—young people must manage their own affairs. Don't ask me to do it, for I ought not to do it; and what I oughtn't to do I won't do. No, I won't,—it's no use talking,—so, just change the subject.—How I wish we could have *two* weddings in one day!"

"You mean Miss Leslie?"

"To be sure I do," replied Mrs. Podd, wiping her eyes.

"And Mr. Ibbotson?"

The old woman nodded significantly.

"I am aware of his attachment to her; but he has never, I believe, ventured to make any proposal; and were he to do so, I fear he would be refused: besides, I doubt his having a sufficiency to make it a prudent marriage."

"Oh, what a plague that money is!" said Mrs. Podd.

"Or rather, the *want* of it, I should say," replied the rector. "But do you think Mr. Ibbotson has expectations——"

"Oh, expectations! don't talk to me of expectations!—they go on for ever till one's dead and buried, and can't expect any longer."

"I hope that will not be Mr. Ibbotson's case, however; for a distant relation, who has always promised to leave him some few thousand pounds, is now on her deathbed."

"Then I hope for her own soul's sake she won't leave the world breaking a promise. Well, then, in addition to the little Kate has of her own, I can give her a very little more, saved up in her father's service."

"You!"

"Yes—why not? I've never spent anything upon myself; I had no beauty to be vain of, so I had no temptation to dress myself up; to be neat and clean was enough for me, and my master found me in soap and water. So what little wages I earned is all safe, to be given back honestly to the child of the man from whom I received it."

“ Dear old Mrs. Podd,” exclaimed Mr. Morton, touched with her disinterested liberality ; “ were all as upright as you——”

“ A pretty race of little crooked men and women there would be ! Now, no flattery ! I wanted to talk to you about Kate and Mr. Ibbotson, that should opportunities occur, you may, with the assistance of Jane, speak a good word for him : and now, as you must be very tired of me, and Miss Jane may be jealous, the sooner you go back to the cottage the better.”

“ And won’t you lean upon my arm ?”

“ No, no ; get you gone ! I ’ve been crying and making a fool of myself, and I won’t let the girls see my eyes red, for they will fret ; so I ’ll just wash them down at the rivulet, and take a quiet turn or two before I go home.”

The young lover left her, eager to behold the dear one, and to talk with her about their plans of future comfort and happiness.

The old woman went and sat herself down by the stream to ponder over the occurrences of her past life, and to thank God that her pilgrimage on earth was drawing to a close.

CHAPTER XXV.

The bridal is over, the guests are all gone,
The bride's only sister sits weeping alone;
The wreath of white roses is torn from her brow,
And the heart of the bridemaid is desolate now.

With smiles and caresses she deck'd the fair bride,
And then led her forth with affectionate pride;
She knew that together no more they should dwell,
Yet she smiled when she kiss'd her and whisper'd farewell.

She would not embitter a festival day,
Nor send her sweet sister in sadness away;
She hears the bells ringing—she sees her depart—
She cannot veil longer the grief of her heart.

She thinks of each pleasure, each pain, that endears
The gentle companion of happier years;
The wreath of white roses is torn from her brow,
And the heart of the bridemaid is desolate now.

What have we to tell of a rural wedding?
perchance only a tale told for the hundredth
time. But, however hacknied the theme, our
actors are to us too interesting, from old as-

sociations, to be left unrecorded in the scene which was to them perhaps the most important of their lives : therefore for the hundredth time we must tell it.

At dawn of day the bells rang merrily, and the Parsonage became at a very early hour a scene of unusual activity. Though a thoroughly unpretending country clergyman, Mr. Frank Morton possessed, and deserved, many acquaintances, and some few friends beyond the immediate sphere of his mere clerical influence.

A rather large party had been invited to breakfast at the Rectory ; and as there was no adequate substitute for the ever-active and intelligent Mrs. Podd, the servants went to bed late and rose early.

Spring was now almost ripening into summer ; chilly days occasionally came, and warned you that it was dangerous to trust to tents and temporary rooms ; but still the projectors of the Rectory festival anticipated, as all such projectors invariably do, an unexceptionable sunshiny day, got up expressly for their own

amusement,—and for once such expectations were not disappointed.

June is often a wet, wishy-washy, watery, cold month; May having, by some expert management, anticipated all its warmth and beauty. Jane Leslie's wedding-day was one of the most precocious days of May; and when May deigns to be genial, what month can offer greater beauty?" 'Tis true that summer may clothe the gardens and the forests in more variety of bloom and fuller luxuriance of verdure; but granting this additional beauty, is it not one of the greatest charms of May, that it is the stepping-stone to summer? and

If summer has more beauty,

All that beauty is to come.

Suffice it then to say, that the morning of Jane Leslie's wedding-day was one of the best imitations of a summer's morning that ever was seen in the world. The birds sang as if quite in a mistake; and there was a sufficiency of flowers and foliage to convince any fashionable family that it was high time to quit the country, if they had not done so al-

ready, and go to some street or square in the metropolis.

The tables for the breakfast were laid in the summer-house, in front of which was the fountain covered with its green wire fence, and beneath it the pure crystal water bubbled as of old. Between this spot and the Rectory house, there was, from a very early hour, a perpetual passing and repassing; one woman carrying her chickens, the next following with her tongues, while another brought up the rear with her hams.

While all was bustle at the Rectory, nothing could exceed the tranquil repose of the cottage. Jane, young, innocent, and happy, slept like some fair infant, without one dream of love, without one worldly thought of future care, and Kate and Mrs. Podd had long been ready for the business and the pleasure of the day ere the former went to her bedside with the intention of rousing her: but long and fondly did she look down upon her calm slumbers, and some sad tears did she shed ere she could summon resolution to call her

from the last repose which she was ever to enjoy under that lowly roof.

When two sisters of nearly similar ages have lived together from infancy in the closest bonds of affection, seldom separated, and if separated, each planning for the other some pleasant surprise or innocent enjoyment ; when one of these is called away to dwell in another house, to devote herself to other pursuits, and to bestow her heart's best affections on another human being, bitter is the trial to the solitary one who stays behind. She is to sit alone where they have sat together, to wander in silence in the garden which used to resound with their prattle and their laughter ; the songs that required the melody of *two* voices must be thrown aside ; and the shelf where the bride's own books, and desk, and workbox, were arranged of old, must now be vacant. The bedchamber, too, where stood the *two* white beds ; where, every morning and every night, prayers were uttered by the elder sister, while the voice of the younger gave its meek response ! One bed will now be

tenantless ; and the matin and the vesper prayer must now be sad and silent, though poured forth with additional fervour for the welfare of the absent.

When a bridemaïd is so situated, we never can have the heart to greet her with the common phrase ; for to “ wish her joy ” on that day is a mockery.

But it was not with a selfish feeling that Kate Leslie wept over her sleeping sister. She keenly felt the loss she was about to experience, 'tis true ; but more keenly did she feel that, however kind and good her affianced husband might appear, Jane was about to quit those whose affectionate solicitude had ever been on the watch to avert from her a sorrow, and to promote her most trifling wishes. Kate fell on her knees by the bedside, and prayed for prosperity for her sister, and for calm contentment for herself. She soon rose ; and having obliterated every trace of tears, she gave the slumberer a fond kiss, and began to assist in the arrangement of her simple toilet.

Mrs Podd's excited feelings found vent al-

ternately in talking or in tears ; and, conscious that she was not in a state to assist anybody, she sat herself down in unaccustomed inactivity, tying up bunches of flowers and bows of white riband.

Mr. Ibbotson had undertaken to give the bride away, and on his arm she leaned as she walked towards the church ; Kate followed, with several distant relatives and friends of the bridegroom. 'Twas natural that Jane, engrossed by the ceremony before her, should pass lightly along the churchyard path, without raising her eye, or glancing to the right or the left ; but Kate, unobserved by her sister, stood still for a moment, and gazed intently on the simple tomb erected to the memory of her father : her eyes were then raised to heaven, her lips moved, and then quickly recovering herself, she proceeded to the church.

No bride was ever more simply attired, but few brides have looked more lovely than Jane ; and when she was united to Frank Morton, Kate felt happy, for she doubted not the sincerity of his attachment.

It was during the rural feast that followed, that Mr. Morton led Kate into a retired part of the garden, and said,

“ You are welcome home, Kate : we are not to part again.”

“ I thank you for the wish,” replied Kate ; “ but I and my old friend Mrs. Podd must still inhabit our cottage. Nay, I know all the arguments you would use ; but, believe me, it is better and wiser. I am always within reach, and, when summoned, shall never be reluctant to come to you. But I think I am becoming an old maid, Frank, and prefer having a house of my own.”

“ I think it not improbable that *somebody* may soon be in a situation to speak his mind, and may have a house as well as a heart to offer you. Till then, make *my* house your home.”

“ Before his offer, Frank, and after his offer, I shall beg to be left in my little cottage.”

“ But consider, should Mrs. Podd die, the loneliness of your situation.”

“ Do not talk to me on melancholy subjects to-day ; I shall require all my little store of

cheerfulness by-and-by. Besides, dear Podd is everlasting: I will not believe that I am ever to lose her. During your absence I shall indeed feel desolate; but you will return in a week, and then I shall be with you often."

The wedding-day had been fixed on a Monday, to enable the bride and bridegroom so far to follow fashionable precedents as to absent themselves until the evening of the following Saturday, when it would be necessary for Mr. Morton to return to attend to his clerical duties. The little boys were to be entrusted for one week to the care of Mr. Ibbotson.

The hour of departure arrived; and Kate Leslie having exerted herself to *look* an adieu of smiles to Mr. and Mrs. Morton,—for to speak was an effort beyond her power,—she saw the carriage depart, and then went home to her solitary cottage and wept as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XXVI.

They who love only once, raise up
One solitary shrine,
Which claims the homage of a *life*,—
And such a love is mine.

DURING the short absence of the bride and bridegroom, Mr. Ibbotson was indefatigable in his attention to Kate; and there was a delicacy about his solicitude which somewhat surprised her, and won her good opinion. She could not conceal from herself that, had she never been wooed by George Hanson, the usher might have been a successful suitor; and it grieved her to think that her inability to give him encouragement was really rendering the poor man miserable. In vain she avoided him, or, when thrown in his way, endeavoured to convince him of the hopelessness of the pursuit,

and to deter him from it by coldness of manner. He seemed conscious that he had no chance of success ; yet his attentions rather increased than otherwise, and he spoke to her and looked at her with a despondency that touched her to the heart.

She was so situated, that it was not possible entirely to avoid her disconsolate swain. Forming a part of the establishment of her brother-in-law, it followed of necessity that they must often meet. She could not relinquish the society of her beloved sister ; yet constantly to meet him was most painful : for determined coolness on her part must be so marked as to cause an awkwardness in every member of so small a family ; and to meet him as she would wish to meet any valued inmate of that house, was running the risk of seeming to encourage him.

There was not the smallest coquetry about poor Kate, and she dreaded the imputation of it ; but still she equally dreaded being thought haughty or reserved towards one who had served her dear father with integrity and zeal. At one

time she thought of asking Mrs. Podd to speak to him ; then it occurred to her that her sister, when she returned, would be the properest person to explain to him the impossibility of her changing her mind ; and then, again, she was loth to compromise his feelings by permitting the intervention of a third person ; and finally, she came to the determination of speaking to him frankly herself.

It was a task of extreme delicacy : for she feared that, were she to lead him to suspect that his presence at the Rectory gave her uneasiness, he would at once invent some plea for resigning his situation, and she would not for the world have been the cause of his losing his small stipend, nor indeed of depriving Mr. Morton of the valuable services of a conscientious and indefatigable assistant.

She resolved to postpone her communication until the return of the bridal party, keeping herself entirely secluded during their absence, and avoiding the many civilities which he took every opportunity of tendering. Mr. Ibbotson

in the mean time became more miserable, and when not engaged in the school-room, wandered about the village like a spectre.

But even in Kate's disinclination to strike the final blow which was to be the downfall of his hopes, Mrs. Podd fancied that she detected what she elegantly called "*a hankering*," forgetting that it was not possible to speak the final word until the lover had more explicitly declared himself. All that Kate could do, was to discourage by her manner his unsolicited attentions. But while Kate was doing her very best to damp her admirer's ardour, Mrs. Podd, like a secret incendiary, was exerting herself to fan the flame, and by encouraging hints was adding fuel to the fire.

"You mustn't be too precipitate," said she to him one day.

"Precipitate!" replied the poor man: "have I not loved her for six years?"

"Well, then, on the other hand, you must not be too dilatory: there must not be too much lead in your composition."

“The precious metals are more likely to forward love-affairs than lead; and of them I can boast, even in anticipation, but little.”

“Together, you will have a competency. Kate has never been used to luxury; and having gone a little down in the world since her father died, you will have the advantage of lifting her up again a step or two. It will all come right in the end, depend on it; and I advise you, as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Morton return, to make Jane your friend.”

“I will do so. If true affection deserves to win her, then I may still indulge a hope: but I know my own deficiencies; and though I am versed in some of the love-stories of Rome and Greece, I——”

“Oh! never talk of those old Romans when you go a-wooing! Why, bless you, my good man! if you wanted to *win me*, that’s not the way you should set about it; I know better than *that*! No, no: get Mr. and Mrs. Morton to put in a good word for you now and then, as if accidental, you know, and without any particular object,—and I’ll do the same; and

between us all, depend on't we shall have another wedding in the old church before many months are gone by."

With this prediction Mr. Ibbotson seemed satisfied; and that day—the day of Mr. and Mrs. Morton's return—he gave the boys a half-holiday.

Happy is it for little schoolboys when affairs go prosperously with the schoolmaster. The sunshine of the master's heart must naturally communicate itself to the wooden forms and inky desks around him; while a disappointed bottom and a hopeless passion are likely to vent themselves in the exercise of the ferule and the rod.

Merrily rang the church-bells on the evening of Mr. and Mrs. Morton's return; and on the following morning every member of the small parish assembled to greet him and his young bride as they passed through the churchyard to the rustic porch. Kate could not refuse to accompany her sister to the Rectory pew, where in former days they used to sit together, and listen to the feeble but deeply-touching voice

of their father. Mr. Ibbotson, as a member of the family, also occupied a seat in that pew, and accident placed him next to her. She was much overcome at again finding herself in that place; and she was conscious, from his constant but unobtrusive attention, that Mr. Ibbotson observed her agitation. When the sermon was over, his ready arm was offered for her support; and as she leant on it, really requiring his aid as she walked towards her cottage, his refraining even from addressing her evinced a delicacy of which she had not supposed him capable. It was impossible for any man to watch a being like Kate Leslie for so many years with exclusive devotion, moulding his every action in an endeavour to please her, and conscious of the improbability of success, without becoming refined, in manner and in thought, and approximating, in a small degree, to the standard of perfection which was ever before him.

No word passed between them when Kate reached the gate of her little garden; he bowed in silence, and pressed her hand in token of the

sympathy he felt with her very natural excitement; and she returned the pressure, and turned her tearful eyes towards him with an expression of gratitude.

Ibbotson went home that day happier than he had ever been in his life. For the first time he felt that Kate had appreciated his intentions towards her; and as she had promised to dine at the Rectory, he looked forward to an opportunity of following up the little advantage which he had gained.

It was not in Kate's nature to be chilling and repulsive to one who had so recently evinced towards her the warm interest of a friend; and not only was her admirer charmed by her affability that evening, but Mr. and Mrs. Morton also looked on with complacency, fully expecting a speedy arrangement between them.

Mrs. Podd also began to anticipate the fulfilment of her prediction; for having herself dined in the Rectory kitchen, she made her appearance at ten o'clock, as she had been desired, bearing in her hand a little bright lantern: but she found that Miss Kate was not

to be left to her sole guidance and protection, for Mr. Ibbotson stood ready, hat in hand, to escort her. When he offered his arm, it was not rejected : Mrs. Podd therefore went *pat-pat* on before ; while Mr. Ibbotson followed, leading Kate with the greatest care, and selecting for her little feet the smoothest parts of the pathway.

Their walk that night was not silent, as had been that of the morning. Kate said little ; but Mr. Ibbotson talked fluently of the happiness of Mr. Morton in possessing so excellent a wife as Jane ; and then he failed not to assert that it had been Jane's happy lot to be under the judicious guidance of an elder sister, who, perfect herself, and calculated to make any man happy, had in fact communicated to her all her own rare and estimable qualities. Kate, who acquiesced in all that was said in favour of her sister, was alarmed when she found that covert praises of herself had been intended ; and almost regretting that she had permitted the good and constant usher to attend her, she wished him good-night in some confusion.

But was confusion in a mistress ever yet in-

terpreted as an unfavourable symptom by a lover? . . . Quite the contrary : and Mr. Ibbotson, though not generally of a romantic turn of mind, hovered about the cottage, until a light beamed from an upper chamber, and he could distinctly see the shadowy outline of a slight figure passing to and fro behind the muslin blind. There he remained until the night became dark, because *his* star was obscured,—or, in *other words*, because Kate, preparatory to stepping into bed, had popped an extinguisher on her candle ; and as she burned no light at night, the cottage became utterly opaque, and the lover with a deep sigh walked home.

Great changes were observed in Mr. Ibbotson about this time. He had always been a neat man, and a clean man, but never what is called a spruce man ; and the boys gazed on him in utter amazement one day when he entered the school-room in an entirely new suit, consisting of a glossy blue coat with brass buttons, a buff waistcoat, and light pepper-and-salt inexpressibles. Such a suit in its first shiny bloom was not exactly calculated to overcome Kate's scru-

ples; and Mr. Ibbotson judged amiss if he conjectured that, not having won her affections by his personal and mental qualities, the small matter of blue cloth, and the brass buttons, and the little morsel of buff, and the few yards of pepper-and-salt, would achieve the victory: in fact, he had never looked so awkward in his life as in his *new* suit, and his *old* suit was not likely to be at all promoted by it.

And yet, if the truth must be told, there was to Kate Leslie something touching in the change which Mr. Ibbotson's *outward* man had undergone,—a change which plainly told her that *within* he was *unchanged*! Infinitely more becoming to him had been the suit of well-worn, patched, and threadbare sables which he had cast aside, for it suited his habits and occupation; but in his newly-purchased garb he looked like anything rather than a country schoolmaster. But to woman's vanity (and where is the woman without it?) there was in truth something inexplicably flattering in the change which had so unexpectedly taken place. But new clothes, when the wearer is unaccus-

toned to them, are apt to give a singular awkwardness and embarrassment to the figure ; and Mr. Ibbotson, the first Sunday that he exhibited himself in church, walked into the Rectory pew and seated himself by Kate with a most ludicrously conscious air. He sat himself down slowly, gently, reluctantly, as if he had been a lady in a new velvet gown, dreading to give it the impress of sedentary habits. He tucked up a tail of his blue coat under each arm, gazed complacently down upon his buff waistcoat, and sat on the very edge of the seat, that the least possible morsel of the mixture breeches should come in contact with the hard deal-board.

But brief was his wearing of the blue, the buff, and the mixtures ; for the relative who had lingered so long, and who had promised to leave him a handsome legacy, at length died, having in her will fulfilled the promise which she had made. Kate was one day walking alone in her little garden, when she was startled by the sudden appearance of her admirer.

Kate at the first glance perceived that there

was much excitement in his manner, and she in some measure prepared herself for the scene which followed.

"I hope I do not intrude on you, Miss Leslie," said the usher in a hurried tone and confused manner: "I have sought you because it is absolutely necessary I should speak to you before I leave Mapleton."

"Leave Mapleton!" exclaimed Kate: "are you really going?"

"I am, for a very brief period; my presence is necessary in the metropolis: my relative is dead, and I shall now possess an independent income."

"If you come to tell me this because you consider me a friend who will with sincerity rejoice in your good fortune, you only do me justice."

"I do consider you a friend, Miss Leslie," replied Ibbotson; "and I know your kind heart sympathises with all around you. But I have not yet told you, that the possession of this income only gratifies me for one reason: I

may now venture to say that I can offer the woman I love a comfortable home."

"I trust, then, Mr. Ibbotson, that you are beloved by the woman you love: if so, your happiness will be secure."

"I wish I could look with confidence to such happiness, Miss Leslie."

"You surely would not wish to possess the hand of any woman unless you were assured that you had won her heart!"

"How could such a man as I am expect to win a woman's heart?—such a woman, I mean, as I have dared to aspire to."

"If she be really what you describe, Mr. Ibbotson, she will not deceive you,—she will never wed the man she cannot love: without mutual love, marriage must be a wretched state."

"Not where there is mutual esteem, on which Love may afterwards raise his bower."

"You are poetical, Mr. Ibbotson."

"I am a lover, Miss Leslie."

"But in the romance of the present, do

not forget seriously to weigh the realities of the future. I have known you, Mr. Ibbotson, all my life, and I should be very sorry were anything to occur which could prevent your looking on me in the light of a friend."

So far had Kate ventured, in the hope of deterring her admirer from coming to an open and specific avowal of his attachment. She well knew that the rejected lover very rarely can remain the unembarrassed friend: she anticipated that her refusal would, in all probability, drive Mr. Ibbotson to seek another home and other friends.

Mr. Ibbotson, perhaps, also felt conscious that he was on the verge of a declaration which, once uttered, could never be retracted; and that, were it unfavourably received, his intimate association with Kate Leslie would be at an end.

For many minutes he was silent, and it was Kate who first spoke.

"Your relative was a distant one, I believe," said she, hoping entirely to turn the

conversation, "and not one endeared to you by your having enjoyed her society."

"We seldom met," replied Ibbotson; "but her affection and kindness were the more disinterested, and the more deserving of my gratitude. I had never contributed to her comfort, yet she had always my future welfare in view: she was aware of my attachment." (Kate started at this sudden and unwelcome return to the old theme, and Mr. Ibbotson paused.) "And she approved of the object of it," he continued; "how could she do otherwise? and though unable to assist me during her life, she at her death, as she had always promised, left me all she possessed, to enable me to marry her to whom my heart had been so long devoted."

Kate saw clearly that she could not hope to avoid coming to an explanation; but, as a last effort at escape, she said,

"And you are now going to attend her funeral?"

"I leave Mapleton for that purpose to-morrow," replied Mr. Ibbotson with much

agitation; "and on you, dear Miss Leslie, it now depends whether I am ever again to return to a place where I have spent so many happy years."

"On *me*!" said Kate.

"Yes, on you! For many, many years you have been the one dear object that has rendered Mapleton a paradise to me. You have had other thoughts, and have often been unconscious of my presence, while I had eyes for none but you, watching you when unperceived, and when no longer near you, thinking of your beauty, and your goodness, and praying to God for your welfare. Do not interrupt me yet, Miss Leslie; do not let me hear your answer yet,—I dread it, though I come to ask it, and do not let me hear it yet; for if it be unfavourable, it will break my heart. You are surprised to hear this from me; for you have, no doubt, deemed me dull, cold, and methodical, and if a lover, incapable of loving with intensity. But Kate—dear Kate—be not offended, let me call you Kate to-day,—my devotion to you has rendered me

the abstracted being which you saw me; no other interested me, and until this day, my love for you was hopeless,—I dared not tell you of it—I longed even to screen it from you, lest the knowledge of my presumption should make you drive me from you. I have often thought that it was such a love as I have read of in a Latin poet,—the love of a poor mortal for a goddess from Olympus. But you are not one who will exult in giving pain,—you are too kind, too gentle and considerate; and if under all my imperfections—my coarse exterior, my uncouth manner, my many faults that render me unworthy of you,—if under all these you can trace one merit, one wish to be more deserving of your favour,—you will weigh that merit—nay, even the mere wish—against my many errors, and refrain from uttering a word that will render me miserable for life.”

Kate was deeply affected by her lover's address; she wept, and was silent.

“If you cannot breathe a *kind* word, Kate, do not speak *to-day* at all; think of me when I am absent, for absence soften errors and im-

perfections, and *try* to think with kindness and indulgence; do not give me an answer now, but let me go——”

“Go,” said Kate, “and I will write.”

“No, do not write; you would find it easier to refuse me in a letter, for you would be spared the sight of my distress. I will open no reply, Kate, for I could not dare to read it. No; let me go unanswered, and I will return to hear my fate from your lips.”

“That must not be,” said Kate: “to permit you to leave Mapleton in uncertainty would be to trifle with your feelings; you must hear my answer now.”

“Pause for a moment, Kate; I dread it—I ought not to have sought it! Oh, what will become of me if you discard me for ever! Hesitate one hour—one moment: think of your childhood—the days that are past, the friend who is gone—your father, Kate—pardon me for touching on so mournful a theme, but let us walk together to his tomb, and let the memory of one so dear to both of us plead for me: were *he* here, Kate, would he not

join our hands, invoking blessings on us both?"

Kate Leslie wept bitterly, and allowed Mr. Ibbotson to take her hand. She, however, soon recovered her self-possession, and said,

"It cannot be, Mr. Ibbotson. Were my dear father here, he would warn me not to deceive an honourable man: I must never marry one I do not love. Nay, do not answer me yet, nor accuse me of cold unkindness: I esteem you, Mr. Ibbotson,—as a dearly-valued friend I esteem you; it would grieve me to the heart to think that you left this place on my account. It must not be: leave it for a time, if you will; some arrangement shall be made by my brother-in-law, some temporary substitute found during your brief absence; but come back to us again—come when change of scene has restored your serenity and self-possession."

"Never!" cried Ibbotson, choking with emotion.

"Say not so, Mr. Ibbotson," replied Kate, kindly, and somewhat terrified into calmness of manner by his violent agitation. "You

have allowed one thought to engross you too long; you have falsely estimated my value, you have made an idol of a weak erring mortal, and you will hereafter wonder at your infatuation."

"I have already been presumptuous," said poor Ibbotson; "but desperation drives me to that which is perhaps more inexcusable. If you love another, I am indeed without hope! I have no right to ask the question, and by speaking on such a subject I am, perhaps, exciting anger where I would have inspired affection: but I would fain know the worst. Kate Leslie, tell me—forgive me for so bold a question—and tell me if you love another?"

Kate turned deadly pale, and for some moments was incapable of uttering a reply. At length she dried her tears, and, turning to him, she said,

"I am about to tell you that which I never expected to breathe to mortal: but it is my duty to speak the truth, were it only to degrade myself from that ideal standard of perfection to which your partiality has raised me. What

I am about to confess will end your delusion ; you will feel that I am not the being you imagined me,—but weak and erring, and unfit to make your home a happy one !”

“ Impossible !” said Ibbotson.

“ Do not interrupt me,” continued Kate : “ it is only by an effort that I can speak of—of the past. Listen to me. You cannot have forgotten one who—who——”

“ Name him not,” replied her lover : “ I know what you would say, and I was conscious of your preference for him ; but—I need not remind you of his errors.”

“ Nor that those errors separated him from me *for ever*. No ; I am aware of that, and I only remember him now in my prayers. But loving *him* as you tell me you have loved *me*, can I ever love another ?”

“ No ; nor did I expect it. Had I loved one so unworthy of my love, I could not again have felt the same affection for another. But he is as one dead to us ; and if of the dead we feel no jealousy, why should the memory of your first love for him render *me* hopeless ?

The virtuous cannot wish to be united to the vicious; and Kate Leslie cannot still cherish in her pure heart a love for George Hanson. There was a time when *I* loved him almost with a brother's love; and when you are my wife—nay, Kate, let me say the word—we will kneel together, and pray for his welfare here and hereafter.”

“Ibbotson,” replied Kate, deeply touched by his earnest affection,—“William Ibbotson,—you deserve the first love of the heart you value, and I have told you frankly all I have to tell. I never can forget George Hanson: young as I was, the influence which he obtained over me is wonderful to myself. I shall never love another as I loved him.”

“I ask it not, I expect it not; but say that you do not look forward to a union with him: I know you *cannot* do so.”

“I do not,—I never did. When he left us, and—but let us not talk of his conduct, nor of that poor girl who—Hear me—what I meant to say is this: when *that* occurred, I regarded him as one dead.”

“And knowing this, Kate, and esteeming you more than ever for this confession, say that you will be mine: I will deserve your esteem, and let me be your dearest friend—the one who is privileged to guard you through life. Give me your hand in token of compliance; do not say one word to-day. You will not again see me for many days,—the interval will restore you to composure; and when we *do* meet, Kate, let your smiles convince me that you think I may make you happy.”

Kate extended her hand to the lover who so well deserved that token of her regard; he kissed it with fervour, and left her to wonder at the result of their interview, and to confide to Mrs. Podd a secret which almost made that elderly personage jump for joy.

Mr. Ibbotson returned to the Rectory in a state of excitement which could not fail to raise the curiosity of Mr. and Mrs. Morton; and though he told no tales, it was soon ascertained that great part of his morning had been passed at the cottage,—and then they easily conjectured the truth.

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“On *me*!” said Kate.

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KATE LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

Where is she now, the young, the gay ?
—No longer gay and young !
O'er one too early snatch'd away
The cold earth has been flung.

WHEN Jane Morton hastened to her sister's dwelling with eager congratulations on the happy prospect before her, she found Kate Leslie in her garden walking slowly up and down with a sad and thoughtful countenance. She could scarcely persuade herself that her recent interview with Mr. Ibbotson had not been a dream, nor could she as yet rejoice at the decided encouragement which she had given him. Yet, acknowledging that she appreciated his good qualities, and that she had no preference for any other person with whom she

could allow herself to indulge a thought of ever being united, what excuse could she give for continuing to discourage one whose happiness seemed really to depend on her decision? and how could she justify to herself her secret partiality and regret for another, who not only had proved himself unworthy of her, but had never given her the slightest reason to suppose that he still thought of her?

Her acceptance of Mr. Ibbotson as a lover, coupled as it was with a frank acknowledgment that her heart was preoccupied by a mournful recollection of its first love, had given that un-presuming man entire satisfaction. To make her happy seemed his sole wish; and could she regret having contributed to his happiness?

But not only had she gladdened the heart of her admirer,—the whole village seemed to participate in his gladness; and Mr. Morton, her sister, and Mrs. Podd seemed transported at her unexpected decision. Having made so many people rejoice, could she regret what she had done, or wish to retract what she had ut-

tered? No; or, at all events, the regret came too late, and therefore must never be acknowledged; and to retract now would be an act of cruel injustice to Mr. Ibbotson.

The consciousness of having acted for the best could reconcile Kate Leslie to most of the changes and chances of life; and having in this instance inspired so much rejoicing, she was endeavouring calmly to contemplate the path that lay before her, resolutely determining to devote every energy of her mind to the duties of her new situation. "I will at least make him happy," she thought; "and in doing that, *perhaps* I shall be happy myself."

Jane had married the man of her choice,—the only man who had ever spoken to her of love, and the only man she had ever loved. Such an union was to Kate's imagination the very perfection of human happiness; and the contemplation of the felicity enjoyed by the newly-married pair at the Rectory was not exactly calculated to render her satisfied with her own lot.

"Oh, Kate!" cried the young wife, kissing

her, "how happy you have made poor Mr. Ibbotson !"

"Have I?" she replied with a melancholy smile: "then I'm sure that ought to make *me* happy; it is so rarely that we can hope to contribute to the happiness of others."

"Oh, to be sure, *you* must be the happiest of the party :—but, dear me ! are you not well ? you look sad !"

"Why, my dear little matron," replied Kate, "I suppose even *you* had some serious thoughts when you first made up your mind to be married !"

"Oh, dear me ! no, not one !" cried Jane. "My only thought was, what a lucky girl am I, to have not one odious obstacle in the way, and to find myself really and truly going to be united to dear, dear Frank !"

"True, Jane ; I suppose those ~~were~~ your thoughts ; and you are a lucky, a very lucky girl."

"Well, and so are you, dear Kate ; for Mr. Ibbotson told Frank all about his legacy and everything, and he means to build a nice pretty

cottage, just by those trees that you admire so much; and you know he will now have three hundred a year, besides what he gets from Frank; and you will be quite rich—and I am so glad!”

“I hope,” said Kate anxiously, “that Mr. Ibbotson does not suspect—I hope *you* do not think, that the change in his circumstances induced me to accept him?”

“Why, how could you say you’d marry the man until he asked you! He could not have proposed for you, Kate, without it.”

“True; no one can impute sordid motives to me. Do you know when he returns?”

“In ten days; and we all hope the marriage will take place immediately.”

“Immediately! — yes,” said Kate; “the sooner the better. If I am to marry Mr. Ibbotson, let it be as soon as he returns to claim me.”

And the preparations for the wedding went briskly and blithely forward, under the direction of Mrs. Podd, who exulted in the fulfilment of her prediction, uttered in Mr. Ibbotson’s pre-

"We shall have another wedding in the next few days before many months are gone by."

How do such prophets wonder at the realization of their predictions when brought about in a manner little anticipated by themselves!

By Mr. Ibbotson's desire, the ground on which he intended to build his cottage was valued and laid out in his absence, and an estimate was made of the expense of the building. The wedding-dresses which had been used so short a time before were revised and corrected, in anticipation of the approaching happy event; and, now that the affair was no longer a secret, every friend who was at all on intimate terms was favoured with a letter announcing the intended marriage in a strictly confidential manner.

The bustle and importance attached to these preparations accustomed Kate Leslie to hearing her marriage discussed. All the awkwardness of her situation began to wear off, and she anticipated Ibbotson's return with real pleasure. His brief absence had been most fortunate: it had given her time to think calmly of the past, the present, and the future; and

the result had been, a virtuous determination to devote her life to the promotion of his happiness. She no longer took delight in the solitude of her little cottage; she shunned it as the source of reflection and sad thoughts, and she preferred the Rectory, where the preparations for her own bridal caused a perpetual bustle. She loved to linger in the places where she had been accustomed long ago to see her father; and she again and again repeated to herself, "He would rejoice to see me married to so good a man."

Every reluctant feeling had been overcome, and she really looked forward with satisfaction to the return of the man who was to claim her as his bride. Her eye was bright, her cheek smiling, her heart cheerful, and but three days remained ere that which Mr. Ibbotson had fixed for his coming, when, sitting in the little drawing-room, so dear to her from old associations, she heard voices in the garden, and went to the window to see who approached the house. Concealed by the muslin blind, she looked down unperceived, and saw Mr. Mor-

ton walking slowly up the little lawn with a tall handsome man. For a moment she leant forward with eager curiosity, but immediately retired, almost forgetting the individual who had been the object of her scrutiny, for she had at once decided that he was a stranger.

Again Kate thought of the absent, and again endeavoured to direct her mind to every incident likely to reconcile her to the future; and she felt that she *was* reconciled,—nay more, she acknowledged that she ought to be grateful to Providence for the home to which she had been invited. Dependence on a married sister, however kind and considerate that sister's husband might prove, was a lot from which Kate shrank: what, then, was the alternative in the event of her losing her old duenna Mrs. Podd?—utter solitude! She certainly could command an income sufficient to preserve her from actual want, and indeed from any laborious occupation; but the future promised nothing but the cheerless habitation of a solitary old maid. Kate's heart sank within her when she contemplated the loneliness of such a life,

and her warm feeling of gratitude for the fond fidelity of her lover almost deserved the name of love, for her heart acknowledged the truth and the delicacy of his attachment. Without one thought for any human being but William Ibbotson, she sat down, and drawing towards her Jane's writing-desk, she began a letter to him, and had nearly finished one page ere she was interrupted by Mr. Morton, who came into the apartment in silence, and looked for some book in the little bookcase which was situated in a recess.

Occupied with what he was about, he did not seem to notice her; but, after a vain search, he turned to her and said abruptly,

“Kate, perhaps *you* can tell me,—did your poor father's ward leave any books behind him when he quitted Mapleton?”

“My father's ward!” said Kate.

“Yes, yes.—I wish Jane were here: where is she?” and Mr. Morton resumed his search, utterly unconscious of Kate's surprise and agitation.

When so young a man as Mr. Morton became

rector of Mapleton at the death of Mr. Leslie, he of course knew nothing of the previous history of the late rector's family ; and when, after the lapse of some years, he married Jane Leslie, he never had been made acquainted with the sad story of her father's ward, nor of her sister's supposed, but never acknowledged, partiality for him. He was also ignorant of the rash and guilty act which finally separated him from his guardian and his former home.

"Why did you ask that question?" said Kate after a pause.

"Because his name may be written in them, and probably the date, and they may be of service to him in some important undertaking."

"There was but one book," replied Kate, "which he forgot to send for,—a Prayer-book. It was my father's gift to him, and his name and the date are written on the blank leaf."

"How fortunate!" replied Mr. Morton. "Where is it?"

"I—I,—not knowing where to send it,—kept it in safety. Indeed my father's handwriting made it doubly dear. It is at the cottage."

At this moment a hasty step was heard on the stairs, the door opened, and the stranger entered the apartment. He started back in evident surprise, and exclaimed,

“ Kate !—Miss Leslie !—I was not aware—” But his utterance became choked, and in silence he approached the table where Kate sat, and took her passive hand, from which, unperceived, fell the pen with which she had been employed.

Kate Leslie had not recognised the stranger when she glanced at him from the window. He was indeed changed ! The blooming careless youth no longer stood before her, but a tall distinguished-looking man, whose age might be guessed at anything between twenty-five and six or seven-and-thirty. The glossy curly hair had prematurely lost its youthful freshness, and from his cheek was gone the summer bloom. His figure had become more manly and robust ; but in his features might be traced the pallid and somewhat sunken cheek, and the lines that betoken habitual gloom. His eyes were bright and beautiful,—but how changed

was their expression ! and beneath them were dark lines, the result of ill health or dissipation. If anything were wanting to complete the alteration, it was supplied by a pair of large moustaches.

But the voice was the same : it was GEORGE HANSON'S voice,—full of old times, of happier times, of the Rectory in her poor father's days, and of walks by the side of the rivulet in the valley ! It was George Hanson's voice, and her hand lay passive in the pressure of his own.

She moved not—she did not utter one word,—but she looked up in his face without attempting to conceal the tears that streamed from her eyes.

He saw her agitation, and, man of the world as he had become, he participated in it, and for a moment his lip quivered and his eyes were moist.

Again pressing her hand, he relinquished it, and turning to Mr. Morton, with a violent effort, he spoke of common topics, and, apologising for his intrusion, said that, knowing every nook in the old house, he thought he

might perhaps be able to assist him in his search.

Kate struggled to command her feelings, but in vain ; and George Hanson, perfectly aware of her distress, without appearing to notice her, led Mr. Morton from the room, pretending that he was anxious to look once more at the old school-room.

Kate Leslie heard his receding step upon the stairs, and then his well-remembered voice came to her ear from a distant chamber. It was indeed reality !—she had seen him,—she had felt the pressure of his hand. She rested her cold forehead on the table before her, and her tears fell on her unfinished letter to Mr. Ibbotson.

CHAPTER II.

Oh, after many roving years,
How sweet it is to come
To the dwelling-place of early youth,
Our first, our dearest home :
To turn away our weary eyes
From proud ambition's towers,
And wander in the summer fields,
Among the trees and flowers !

BEING one of the executors of his deceased relation, Mr. Ibbotson found that the arrangement of her affairs devolved principally upon himself. Far from being able therefore to return to Mapleton immediately after her funeral, he saw business of an intricate and harassing nature accumulating around him, and he was obliged to write to his fair betrothed, announcing to her the impossibility of his returning before the expiration of three weeks.

Kate Leslie, startled and alarmed as she

had been at the unexpected reappearance of George Hanson, felt it a relief that Mr. Ibbotson had not been present to witness their meeting; and she now most fervently hoped that long ere his return her brother-in-law's guest would have departed.

Overcome by an apparition so unlooked for, she had at their first meeting given way to the violence of her emotion, and, by her tears and the excess of her agitation, had betrayed that the interest she had formerly felt and acknowledged for her father's pupil was still far from being obliterated. She was aware of this, and she could have wished that greater self-possession had enabled her to assume the air of forgetfulness or indifference.

"And yet," thought she, "wherefore should I wish it? The feeling I evinced was a natural feeling for one who was once so dear to us all; and the more I am sensible of his unworthiness, the more natural is it that I should be agitated at his unexpected presence. But I will not avoid him, — I long to meet him again; for I would have him see by my man-

ner, that the warm interest which I failed to conceal clings only to the past, to the days of innocence, to the honourable boy who was pupil to my father; but that for the present career of one guilty and degraded, I feel no sympathy."

Thus soliloquised Kate; and, strong in her own good intentions, she set forth to dine at the Rectory, where she knew she should meet the subject of her meditations.

Mr. Hanson had applied to the present Rector of Mapleton to procure for him, either in Danesford, which was his birthplace, or in its neighbourhood, certain certificates and documents which it was necessary for him to obtain to prove himself entitled to the property which was entailed upon him and other grandsons of the Duke of Canterton.

Mr. Morton had most readily granted him every assistance, and had insisted on his accepting a bed at his house during the time which business required him to pass in the neighbourhood.

Kate met him, as she had intended, with

cold indifference ; and he seemed surprised and mortified at the contrast between her manner at their second and their first meeting : he coloured and bit his lip, and remained for some moments silent. It is possible that his vanity, gratified by the emotion she had evinced, had anticipated new evidences of interest, and new triumphs, at every meeting : if so, he was bitterly disappointed. Kate betrayed no embarrassment : when he did address her, she replied with the most ready but the coldest answer ; even her eyes did not seem to avoid him,—nay, she sat for some moments gazing on him, and thinking to herself, “ Is it possible that the seducer of Mary Middleton should smile, and speak, and live ! ” Hanson looked up, and she withdrew not her eyes ; but *his* shrank before her glance, for he read disgust in its expression.

Deeply mortifying to such a man as Hanson was the indifference or contempt of one whose affections had once been fixed on him : but never was there such a man who did not believe that, having once been the idol of a young girl’s heart, though his unkind-

ness may have wounded her, though his guilt may have disgusted her, still, where the idol once stood, a shrine remains untenanted, and there, give him but *opportunity*, sooner or later will affection be rekindled.

It was with no unpractised eye that George Hanson watched the fair expressive face before him. The countenance of woman had been his study ; often had he tried to interpret its expression, with the villanous intention of taking advantage of every weakness he might detect ; and though now he gazed with no such diabolical design, still there was peril to the innocent girl who was watched with an interest intended to appear so intense. There was too much of the basilisk in the admiring earnestness of his glance ; and the quiet, unconscious indifference of the victim added not to her security.

When their early dinner was concluded, Mr. Morton retired to attend to the duties of his school-room, which during the prolonged absence of Mr. Ibbotson claimed more than his customary attention ; and Jane, whose si-

tuation required care and occasional repose, went to lie down for an hour in her own room. Kate was therefore left alone with Mr. Hanson; but, evincing no embarrassment, she calmly opened a work-box and proceeded to employ herself as if no one had been in the room. Again the spoilt and selfish man felt humbled; again he bit his lip, and hesitated ere he could determine in what words to address her.

Rarely indeed had the tongue of George Hanson faltered when intent on breathing into the ear of a woman any vain language prompted by his reckless fancy. At length he spoke, and the sound of his voice startled his companion.

“Would it be exacting too much from your politeness, Miss Leslie, were I to ask you to accompany me in a short walk? There are one or two spots of deep interest to me, which I could wish to visit with one who will at least understand and appreciate any feeling I may evince at first beholding them.”

Kate paused but for one moment; and then

rising and laying aside her work, she took her bonnet and shawl from a window-seat, and in a very short time expressed her readiness to attend him.

“ You will find most of your old haunts unchanged, Mr. Hanson,” said Kate as she led him through the garden.

“ They are indeed unchanged,” was his reply ; “ and there is something to me painful, mournful, in their identity, feeling as I do such changes in myself !”

He paused for an instant, gazing on an old seat which occupied a corner of the lawn.

“ I beg your pardon, Miss Leslie, for detaining you. Almost the last time I ever saw my mother, she sat *there*.”

Kate stood still in perfect silence ; and when he wiped his brow with his handkerchief, her heart softened towards him, and she respected his feelings.

He turned hastily away with a deep sigh.

“ My poor mother !” he murmured ; “ my

ruin ! my ruin ! What didst thou ever teach me to regard but SELF !”

He now led the way from the garden towards the churchyard : he spoke not, nor did his companion, and it was without her aid that, passing along the narrow path, he soon discovered the humble tomb of Mr. Leslie ; and, kneeling down on the grass, he leant his bare forehead on the stone slab, and remained for a considerable period motionless. This was not affectation ; he had always from a boy been accustomed to give free vent to every feeling : and all selfish people are exuberant in the demonstration of their joys or sorrows. A more considerate man would have checked his own vehemence, out of consideration for the feelings of the daughter who stood by.

But the daughter saw no error in the young man's grief for her father ; and again her heart softened towards George Hanson.

“ I have many apologies to make, Miss Leslie,” said he at length, rising, and leading her to a rude bench beneath the wide-spreading branches of the yew.

“ Pray make none, Mr. Hanson,” she replied: “ I will venture to assure you that I have been glad to witness your emotion.”

“ I thank you for saying so much. Let me think that one human being still feels some interest for me, however unworthy I may be of awakening one kind thought in such a being as yourself.”

His companion was silent.

“ There is one subject, Miss Leslie, on which I would fain speak to you,—and here is the fit place—among the dead, for it is of the dead that I would speak.”

Kate looked up inquiringly, and with an air of doubt and fear.

“ You remember Mary Middleton ?” said Hanson in a low voice.

“ Remember her !” cried Kate, starting, and receding from him.

“ She is dead !” continued he in the same hollow tone.

“ Dead !”

“ Yes ; young, fair, beautiful, animated as you remember her, she is dead. She died three years ago.”

“Oh! say that you made all possible reparation,—say that she died a wife, that she died happy, and that you were kind to her in her last moments!”

“She forsook me.”

“Forsook you!” said Kate with an expression of incredulity.

“She sought out her father,” replied Hanson; “and, clasped in each other’s arms, I have heard that the father and the child passed some wretched hours together. But they died—both died—the old man first, and Mary did not long survive him.”

“And happy was it for them!” exclaimed Kate.

“And this was the ruin wrought by me!” and saying these words, George Hanson burst into an uncontrolled agony of tears. He seemed unconscious of the presence of any person, giving vent to the most violent exclamations, occasionally rising and pacing to and fro, as if by active exertion endeavouring to overcome his emotion, and then again yielding, sitting down upon the bench, and weeping with all the loud wailing of a child. At last the worst

violence of the storm began to abate, and, as if suddenly conscious of Kate's presence, he spoke in broken and half-choked sentences.

"It was my mother's fault,—the error of education, Selfishness, —there it lay, and it was my ruin! Oh! Miss Leslie, you might have saved me; for never did I love human being as I loved you,—never—no!—Poor Mary Middleton!—that was a fancy—a vanity;—but it was not love. I loved but one,—she might have saved me—Oh God! may she not save me yet!"

Again he sat down on the bench, and buried his face in his hands. Kate Leslie sat by him trembling. What had she heard? He never loved but one, and *she* that one! She might have saved him, and—did he not say it?—*she might save him yet!*

What spell had changed her since she left the house that evening with her guest?—what had so suddenly aroused within her heart the thoughts, the feelings of other days,—thoughts and feelings which she had struggled, and she hoped successfully, to bury for ever in oblivion? Why sat she now by the side of George

Hanson, guilty as she knew him to be, with a heart melting at his grief, and with a consciousness that she still loved him? She longed to take his hand, and by its silent pressure assure him of her friendship. Such would have been the prompt, unhesitating act of a friend of his own sex; but woman dared not evince so much interest, and she gazed on him in silence.

The shadows of evening had stolen unperceived upon them ere they rose from their seat in the churchyard to return towards the Rectory. As they crossed the little lawn, George Hanson pressed his companion's hand, and whispered in her ear, in a tone that startled her by its similarity to the voice she used to hear,

“God bless you, Kate, for your kindness!”

She made no answer; but her cheek glowed, and she *felt* that he had again addressed her by her Christian name. She saw him no more that evening. After spending a short time in her sister's apartment, she retired to her little cottage, and there she passed a sleepless night.

CHAPTER III.

Oh, woman dwells in loneliness, while restless man may
rove,
Perhaps *he* was not made to feel *her* all-engrossing love !
And still I think—and at the thought my eyes with tears
grow dim,
He loves me not with that fond love which I have felt for
him.

GEORGE HANSON was returned a penitent ! his tears flowing, his heart broken for his former crimes. Death had severed the tie which would have perpetuated his guilt, and he now seemed to wish only to bury amid the haunts of his more innocent youth the very remembrance of the errors of his manhood. It was thus Kate thought of him ; and, alas ! not *only* thus. She could not but remember that there no longer existed a Mary Middleton, the original hapless cause of disunion between herself and George. She was

dead, and not even in her grave lay the first affections of her lover: it had been but a vanity, a fancy! so he had said; and though it seemed to add infamy to her abduction when he acknowledged that it was not prompted by ardour of affection, still to *her* who had been forsaken, and who was now assured that *she* had been the only one really loved, to *her* there was a merit in his constancy of *heart*, though his profligacy of *conduct* had left her for years in unnoticed desertion.

But her own engagement to Mr. Ibbotson! It flashed upon her memory, carrying death to the fond hopes that were springing up in her bosom.

“He knows not of that engagement,” said she; “but he must know it, and the sooner the better.” She rose, and during the arrangement of her simple toilet, she saw from her casement George Hanson passing slowly down the path which led to the well-known walk by the rivulet, so oft frequented by them in other and happier days. She instantly re-

solved to follow him, and tripping lightly forwards, she very soon overtook the solitary rambler, whose step betrayed the melancholy depression of his heart.

“ I hope I do not intrude upon you, Mr. Hanson,” said Kate, flushed with the rapidity of her walk, and the consciousness of having that to say which it would be no easy matter to express. “ I must confess that I have followed you.”

“ I thank you for doing so,” replied Hanson with evident gratification. “ There was a time, Miss Leslie, when you would not have thought it necessary to apologise for joining me in this walk, which we used to call *our own*.”

“ I need not remind you of the many changes that have taken place since the period you are thinking of,” replied Kate seriously: “ you alluded to them yourself last night.”

“ I alluded to no change in my sentiments towards yourself.”

“ There are changes, sir, of which you may yourself not be aware.”

Hanson started. "Your sentiments towards *me* are changed, then?"

Kate paused irresolutely, and moved her lips several times ere she could reply.

"My sentiments towards you are still those of a friend," at length she said; "and should you again have occasion to visit Mapleton, I may venture to say that you will always be kindly received by my husband."

"Your husband!" exclaimed Hanson: "to whom do you allude?—Husband! you are jesting!"

"How could I jest on such a subject? You have evidently not heard of my engagement."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Ibbotson."

Clenching his hands with violence, and with his face burning with rage and excitement, George Hanson stood before Kate Leslie more like an infuriated madman than a rational being.

"Engaged!" he vociferated,—"*engaged!* and to Mr. Ibbotson! Fool, idiot that I have

been ! I that might have secured your affections ! Yes, you know it, and will not deny it, —I loved you—loved ! I love you still, as I never loved mortal, and as I shall never love again : and you loved me ; and—yes, you cannot be so changed—you must even now prefer me to that drivelling tutor. Fool that I was ! I might have prevented all this—but it is too late !”

“ It is too late ; and I might be—nay, I must be spared the hearing of observations derogatory to the man to whom I am betrothed, and therefore insulting to myself.”

George Hanson bit his lip, and walked rapidly up and down a green portion of the path ; while Kate, hardly knowing what rash and violent act she might next expect, leant for support against a weeping willow.

“ I beg your pardon,” said Hanson, at length approaching Kate more collectedly ; “ you shall hear no more of this : only treat me as an old friend as long as I am detained in your neighbourhood, and you shall have no cause to complain of my conduct.”

Kate gave him her hand with kindness, and they separated.

From this day Kate was not subjected to any similar ebullition of temper: George Hanson's attention to her was undeviating, and in delicacy and fervour equalled the devotion of the earliest days of his affection. But nothing was said which could justify reproof or remonstrance; and she submitted to those attentions, hardly conscious of the tender influence which a companion so devoted was gradually acquiring over her.

Poor Mrs. Podd, with the best intentions in the world, was perhaps the very worst companion and adviser that could possibly have fallen in Kate's way, under her very delicate and peculiar circumstances. George Hanson had always been her most especial favourite. The heinous error which had driven him from her good graces, was the seduction of Mary Middleton; but now that the grave had closed over that poor girl, ("who, perhaps, after all," said Mrs. Podd, "*originally* led him into temptation,") she was by no means of

opinion that the seducer was to be considered an outcast and never to be forgiven. She could quote the Bible over and over again to prove the contrary; and we very much doubt whether, had she been lady of the Rectory, the fatted calf would not have been killed to celebrate the return of the penitent George.

He was not long in making the discovery that he possessed a warm and zealous friend in the dwelling-place of the woman he loved: and he then often found means to waylay Mrs. Podd, as if by accident, in her very short excursions, and improved her already favourable opinion by the kindness and gentleness of his manner towards her.

Mrs. Podd could not help acknowledging to herself that it was a thousand pities poor Miss Kate should be forced to marry Mr. Ibbotson, a man whom it was certain she did not love. To be sure, when he offered, nobody could have expected that George Hanson would return to claim her. “*Has* he claimed her, though?” thought Mrs. Podd; “I wonder whether he has!—all depends upon *that*.”

She lingered in her young lady's apartment that evening, affecting to be putting things to rights which had not been out of their places, and after one or two preliminary hems, she began—

“It is quite like old times, having Mr. Hanson here, I declare.”

Kate looked up from a book she was reading, but answered only with a sigh.

“He's just the same good creature he always was,” said Mrs. Podd.

“I hope he is better than he has been: it is not uncharitable to say so.”

“Oh, I know what you mean,” replied Mrs. Podd. “Of course, all that was dreadful; but who knows where the great blame lay? and of the dead we say nothing. All I know is, that he seems to have come back among us just as fond of all that he used to be fond of as ever.”

“He seems to retain his old partiality for you,” said Kate, anxious to evade Mrs. Podd's very evident allusion to herself.

“For me! Oh, to be sure, I can see through

his anxiety to gain my good will. I know his motive, and I like him the better for it: I would not have him courting an old woman, were it not for the sake of obtaining her good word with a young one."

"Good heavens! can you be aware what you are saying?" exclaimed Kate almost indignantly. "Have you forgotten Mr. Ibbotson?"

"Indeed I have not; he preys upon my mind perpetually. How little did you know, when you accepted him, that one you had preferred so many years would reappear and propose for you!"

"And who has told you of his intention to propose for me?"

"What! and has he not proposed?"

"Assuredly not; nor, since the day that he was made acquainted with my engagement, has he said one syllable which could be misconstrued into a declaration of attachment."

"His attentions have been incessant."

"I grant you that, and his manner has

been such as a man would assume who wished to win a woman's heart. But ought not this to put me the more upon my guard?"

"You astonish me, my dear Kate," replied Mrs. Podd, "and you only show me what an old fool I am."

Poor Kate talked of being "*on her guard*:" but where was her guard—where the armour that could avail her, associated daily with one whom she had loved from his very boyhood, and who (well versed in the ways of the world, and in every wily fascination most likely to win a woman's heart,) devoted every talent, every acquirement, to the conquest of the fond one that lay already at his feet?

His conversation, his manner of addressing her, his every look, were the result of systematic study; and every topic was chosen which could revive old associations. Phrases that had escaped her memory were again breathed into her ear; and they brought back, as if by magic, the days of girlhood, and a thousand endearments that once accompanied their utterance.

George Hanson evidently suffered from debility of constitution ; and there was often a slight cough, and a hectic flush on his thin cheek, calculated to arouse the alarms of one who loved him. These terrors were not lost upon Kate ; and when the invalid became aware, as he very soon did, of the anxious interest with which she watched him, the slight symptoms of disease were aggravated, and the cough was often resorted to as an accessory to ensure the success of a sigh.

" You should not stay out so late, Mr. Hanson, with that cough ; it is dangerous," said Kate.

" I see no danger," replied Hanson : " death can only be dreaded when life is of value. I should soon get well had I a home and a fond nurse ;—but such a lot can now never be mine !"

Kate was silent : her simple, well-meant observation had led, as was now generally the case, to an allusion which was both embarrassing and unanswerable.

“Has, then, life no charm for him!” thought she; “and, young as he is, will he never have a happy home, and a nurse, such as *I* might have been to him!”

It was a great trial to Kate Leslie !

CHAPTER IV

Oh ! I come not to upbraid thee,
Nor to woo thee am I here ;
Though in peril I would aid thee,
Though in sorrow I would cheer.

It will be a source of wonder,
When we part—I know it well :
Why our hearts were torn asunder,
None shall ever hear me tell.

I would peril life to save thee,
For no other do I live ;
And the love I freely gave thee,
To no other can I give.

THE sun shone gaily through the open casements of the Rectory into the little sitting-room where sat Kate Leslie, busily employed in making some article of nursery millinery for her sister. The door suddenly opened, and, beaming with joy and animation, Mr. Ibbotson stood before her.

“Here I am at last, dearest Kate,” said he ;
“and I’ve brought you the plans for our
cottage : do look,—are they not beautiful ?”

Kate, at his entrance, had turned deadly
pale, and had risen from her seat. The work
on which she had been employed fell upon the
ground ; and when he had finished addressing
her, she sank down on her chair, covered her
face with her hands, and burst into a violent
flood of tears.

At this moment, George Hanson hastily
entered the room, and, without noticing Mr.
Ibbotson, exclaimed, “ Kate, I’ve found the
book we were talking of.—Good God ! are you
not well ?—speak to me ; look up ;—for mercy’s
sake, answer me !”

He had seized her hand with anxious fer-
vour ; but she withdrew it, and with much
effort assured him she was better.

Ibbotson beheld them with an anxious,
doubtful scrutiny : his heart felt chilled ; and
he hastily took up the plans of his cottage,
folded them roughly, and thrust them into his
pocket.

"Mr. Ibbotson!" exclaimed Hanson, suddenly aware of his presence, "I fear you find Miss Leslie not so well as when you left her."

"I fear I do see a change," replied Ibbotson.

Hanson's lip wore a half-subdued smile of contempt as he again took up his book and quitted the room, muttering a hope that Miss Leslie would soon be better.

As soon as he was gone, Ibbotson placed a chair close to Kate; and sitting down by her side, took her hand and kissed it.

"Kate," said he with a faltering voice, "let me implore you never to withdraw from me your confidence and friendship. I will prove that I deserve both; and you shall never want a friend—a father—while I live. I have most unintentionally involved you in a difficulty. I presumed to solicit your hand, and you listened to my persuasions, at a time when neither of us could have anticipated the return of one who had been dear to you from boyhood. He is returned to claim you; and, bitter as is the disappointment to me, I resign you: I should

be inhuman could I hold you bound by such a promise !”

“ You are under a mistake,” replied Kate, trembling with emotion. “ He is returned—but—but not to claim *me*.”

“ If he has abstained from a proposal, I honour him for respecting your engagement to me : his knowledge of your situation of course caused his silence.”

Poor Kate hoped that was indeed the cause.

“ I feel certain, my dear Kate,” said Ibbotson, “ that your chances of happiness are greater with him, if he be inclined to marry you, than with me. With me, indeed, your lot in life might be more tranquil and untroubled ; but to *his* home, wherever it may be, you will take a store of love, that will sweeten many a bitter hour, and brighten many a dark one. No, no ; you would never be happy in my poor cottage ; for the love of your heart would not be there, and so your heart would pine away. I shall never build my cottage now.”

“ Oh ! Mr. Ibbotson,” said Kate, weeping bitterly, “ it breaks my heart to have given

you pain ; and, indeed, I never meant it ;—I could not avoid Mr. Hanson's attentions ; but though he has spoken of his love for me, it has always been with an allusion to its hopelessness."

"And why hopeless !—*Nil desperandum* is what every little boy is taught, and — But I must inquire further into this. Only assure me, dear Kate, that you consider I have acted as your friend, with kindness and consideration."

Kate could only press his hand.

"I understand you," he replied ; "and I have one more question to ask,—perhaps a painful one : do not attempt to speak, but answer as before — I shall comprehend the pressure of your finger. Supposing that you are trifled with, that these undiagnosed attentions mean nothing, should I deem it due to your respectability that our marriage should take place ?—have I your authority so to act ? Trust to my honour that it shall not take place if I see that it can be avoided."

Again Kate's hand gave token of assent ;

and once more pressing his lips upon her taper fingers, he left her.

With a heavy heart Mr. Ibbotson now went in pursuit of his young rival. He heard at the Rectory that he had been seen walking towards the churchyard; and thither he immediately followed, and found him sitting on the old bench beneath the yew-tree, reading a book, which he laid aside when he saw him approach.

"You are come forth, like myself, to enjoy the beauty of this bright afternoon?" said George.

"I came forth to seek you, sir," replied Ibbotson, seating himself on the bench: "I had no thought of enjoyment."

"To seek *me*!"

"Yes; for I have matters of much importance to discuss with you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hanson with uneasy surprise. "It is fortunate you found me: the neighbourhood of this old church is my favourite haunt."

"I was told that I should find you here; and the neighbourhood of the old church is a

fit place for our conversation. There is to be a wedding in that church in a few days."

George Hanson started and changed colour; but he controlled his feelings, and replied,

"A wedding! indeed! — a rare occurrence in a country village. We shall be quite gay."

"To prove that I wish you to be so, I am come on purpose to invite you to the wedding."

"To invite *me*!" exclaimed Hanson, trembling with emotion. "You must, then, be deeply interested; — may I ask the bride's name?"

"Kate Leslie."

"Kate Leslie!" cried George, starting up with vehemence. "What absurd cruelty is this, sir! Are you come hither on purpose to insult me? — and is this precipitate marriage thus suddenly decided on to crush at once the heart of that poor girl?"

"Pray, restrain your violence, young man," replied Mr. Ibbotson with calmness. "I have said nothing calculated to insult *you*; and I believe Miss Leslie will be the last person in the world likely to second you in any accu-

sation you may make against *me*, for want of due consideration for her feelings.”

“ This atrocious arrangement speaks for itself : you must be aware that the girl does not love you.”

“ When Miss Leslie, sir, did me the honour to accept my proposals, I am bound to believe that ~~she~~ had no reason to doubt her inclination to fulfil the engagement into which she *voluntarily* entered. Since that period, her mind has been harassed and unsettled by the most open and decided attentions from one who, by similar attention, won her young heart in days long gone by.”

“ You admit it—you admit her love for me !”

“ I have stated fact ; but I have not stated *all*. I have not forgotten that the same admirer, having, as I said, won her young heart by precisely similar attentions so long ago, did at that by-gone period coldly and heartlessly desert her, and may now again act the same unmanly and dishonourable part.”

“ Dishonourable !”

“ I think so,” replied Ibbotson without emotion. “ Perhaps, *you* differ with me.”

George Hanson bit his lip and was silent.

“ But you are regarding me as an enemy,” continued the tutor ; “ when, in truth, only the kindest and best intentions have brought me hither.”

George Hanson looked up with a sneer of contempt ; but Mr. Ibbotson proceeded without appearing to notice it.

“ You have, by your devoted attentions, revived in the heart of Kate Leslie the affections which absence and a supposition of your indifference had well nigh smothered. My dearest wish is to see Kate happy ; and if your intentions towards her are those of a man of honourable feeling, it is,”—and here the tutor paused ere he could finish his sentence,—“ it is *to you*, Mr. Hanson, that she shall be united in that church.”

“ To me !” exclaimed Hanson, starting up.

“ To you. I have not said so much without deeply considering the painful difficulty of my task : I am doing what I consider to be my

duty, and Providence will support me through it." He did not weep; but he hastily passed his handkerchief over his face and forehead.

George Hanson stood before him in the greatest embarrassment, and stammered a few half-distinct sentences.

"So precipitate! — so many arrangements must previously be thought of;—I am unprepared—have not even contemplated such an event. I came hither after a temporary retirement from society, to possess myself of documents which would prove beyond the possibility of future litigation my title to a very considerable property: nothing has yet been done, and at such a moment marriage is not to be thought of!"

"Sir," said Mr. Ibbotson with great distinctness, "you have been for three weeks paying this young lady these attentions, perfectly aware of the favourable impression which similar attentions made on her heart long ago. You could not therefore have been unconscious that the line of conduct you were pursuing was likely to compromise her happiness: you were

also perfectly aware of her engagement to me. I can therefore entertain but one opinion of conduct so reckless and so selfish."

"You use strong language, sir," said Hanson.

"Precisely the language I think the occasion requires. And when I speak of selfishness, I must be permitted to add, that it was ever your bane, and the bane of all who fell within your influence."

Hanson's cheeks blazed with indignation; but he folded his arms and sat down.

"I have now," continued Mr. Ibbotson, "but a few words to add. Thursday next will be the wedding-day of Kate Leslie. If she is claimed by him who long ago took cruel pains to win her affections, to him I will resign her, and will act a father's part, and give her away: but should the man I mean prove a heartless scoundrel, I shall claim the fulfilment of her engagement, and cannot but believe that when once aware of her lover's unworthiness, she will be reconciled to her union with a plain, unpretending man, whose sole object in life will be to make her happy."

“By heavens, you know not what you are doing!” cried Hanson with extreme violence: “you are driving me beyond my reason, and there is an obstacle.”

“What obstacle? — and, whatever may be its nature, why did you not let it prevent the attentions which have led to the suggestion of your marriage? — But what is the obstacle? If insurmountable, that alone will be sufficient in due time to reconcile Miss Leslie to your departure.”

“Départure! I cannot, will not go,” cried George desperately; “nor shall she be united to another. No; let me perish first, soul and body!”

“For shame, sir!” interposed Ibbotson. “Allow me to ask the nature of this obstacle.”

“Oh, pecuniary difficulties—nothing more: but, mark me, she shall not marry you.”

“I abide by the arrangement I proposed, sir,” replied the tutor; “and with regard to the difficulties of which you speak, if they be the only obstacle ——”

"And why should you doubt me when I assert they are?" said Hanson petulantly.

"Nay, I have no reason to doubt. I was only going to add, that Kate Leslie will not increase the embarrassments of the man she marries. She has now, as you must be aware, a small independence; and to that, as I can no longer look forward to her sharing my pittance, I mean to add a small income, the united property to be settled upon herself, and to be paid quarterly, only on delivery of her own receipt."

George Hanson had heard little of what the kind tutor had been saying: pacing rapidly up and down, and, using the most extravagant action, he exclaimed,

"I am driven to it! She shall not be torn from me: no, no, I will dare all, and can never be more miserable!"

"You have then made up your mind?" inquired Ibbotson.

"I have, sir," replied Hanson, folding his arms with suddenly assumed composure.

"And at this church on Thursday at ten o'clock you receive the hand of Kate Leslie?"

“Such is my intention.”

“You do not object to the pecuniary arrangement which I mentioned?”

“I heard it not; but I do acquiesce in any arrangement which you have made for her comfort.”

“You will now, I presume, seek Miss Leslie, and at once make your long-delayed proposal. Let her fully understand that I voluntarily resign her. I cannot venture to see her again ~~until~~—until—to-morrow!”

“Must I speak to her?” said Hanson, as if irresolutely. “Yes, yes; but first let me go to the Rectory. Wine,—give me wine! I cannot go through this without wine!”

The two ill-assorted companions walked together from the churchyard, and separated at the Rectory,—Hanson to prepare for his interview with Kate Leslie, and Ibbotson to retire to his solitary chamber, there to endeavour, by prayer and meditation, to reconcile his heart to its most trying disappointment.

CHAPTER V.

Oh ! am I not a lover still,
 In heart and soul the same
 As when I sought thy bower first
 And learnt to breathe thy name ?
 Oh ! look I not as proud of thee, —
 Oh, speak I not as kind ?
 And when I leave thee, do I not
 Leave joy itself behind ?

The love I offer'd long ago
 Is but matured by time,
 As tendrils round their chosen bough
 Cling closer as they climb.
 Then am I not a lover still,
 In heart and soul the same
 As when I sought thy bower first
 And learnt to breathe thy name ?

WHEN George Hanson sought the cottage of Kate Leslie, and wildly and incoherently poured forth protestations of attachment, and entreaties that she would consent to become his wife on the following Thursday, she detected

neither in his flushed cheek, nor the extravagance of his manner, the unnatural excitement, almost amounting to intoxication, which alone enabled him, even thus incoherently, to get through an interview so unlooked-for and so embarrassing.

Kate was herself too much agitated and surprised to wonder at the emotion evinced by another. To attempt to conceal her partiality for Hanson was out of the question: the wild ardour of his protestations soon drew from her tears which were no indication of regret, and a blushing acknowledgment that his affection was returned.

She spoke with the deepest interest of Mr. Ibbotson, expressing with sincerity the anxiety which she felt, lest her conduct towards him should appear unfeeling, and cause him deep and lasting pain. But Hanson was not the man to allow a feeling of delicacy to interfere with any arrangement on which he had set his heart: he therefore spoke of Mr. Ibbotson as a man of cold temperament, who had entered into an engagement with her merely

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 And learnt to breathe thy name ?

WHEN George Hanson sought this cottage of Kate Leslie, and wildly and incoherently poured forth protestations of attachment, and intreaties that she would consent to become his wife on the following Thursday, she detected

neither in his flushed cheek, nor the extravagance of his manner, the unnatural excitement, almost amounting to intoxication, which alone enabled him, even thus incoherently, to get through an interview so unlooked-for and so embarrassing.

Kate was herself too much agitated and surprised to wonder at the emotion evinced by another. To attempt to conceal her partiality for Hanson was out of the question: the wild ardour of his protestations soon drew from her tears which were no indication of regret, and a blushing acknowledgment that his affection was returned.

She spoke with the deepest interest of Mr. Ibbotson, expressing with sincerity the anxiety which she felt, lest her conduct towards him should appear unfeeling, and cause him deep and lasting pain. But Hanson was not the man to allow a feeling of delicacy to interfere with any arrangement on which he had set his heart: he therefore spoke of Mr. Ibbotson as a man of cold temperament, who had entered into an engagement with her merely

“Is it not all his own doing?” she said to herself again and again. But another question invariably intruded itself:

“Is he not sacrificing his own happiness to promote mine?”

It was one she could not answer, and one which she dared not scrutinise. She fell upon her knees and prayed for his welfare.

She dared not analyse the motives which had actuated her own conduct; nor could she venture to investigate the strange and contradictory behaviour of her lover. She did not doubt the sincerity of his attachment, and relying wholly upon that, she ventured to anticipate many years of connubial happiness.

Again she prayed; and her prayer was for strength of mind, and that she might gradually obtain a salutary influence over her husband, that gently and imperceptibly she might be enabled to guide him from the path of error, and the disquietudes he had entailed upon himself, to a more virtuous and far happier way of life; and that hand in hand

they might go down to the grave together, looking forward with faith and hope to a re-union in that brighter sphere, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

Such was the prayer of Kate Leslie the night before her marriage.

CHAPTER VI.

I 've lived to hear your wedding bells !
The sound my heart's last hope dispels ;
Yet may you be from sorrow free
When those sweet bells shall toll for me.

I stood within the rustic porch ;
I saw you pace the village church ;
I saw you kneeling by his side,
When one more happy claim'd his bride.

And smiling friends with fond caress
Came near the lovely bride to bless :
I stood aloof,—you heard not then
The murmur of my deep AMEN.

THE morning of the marriage of George Hanson to Kate Leslie was a most unseasonable one: the rain, which had fallen during the greater part of the night, and had rendered the pathways about Mapleton almost impassable, still continued to fall in torrents, and the wind waving the boughs of the trees

with a sad and wintry sound, added greatly to the inconvenience experienced by every pedestrian who was forced to leave the house, by making it almost impossible for him to hold an umbrella.

There were no equipages provided to convey the bridal party to church; and the fastidious George Hanson, when he contemplated the inconveniences which awaited him and his fair bride, was in a humour little calculated to throw sunshine on such a day.

That he should have lived to see the woman who was to bear his name wade to church in pattens, protected from the rain and wind by a large yellow cotton umbrella held over her head with difficulty by a great vulgar tutor!

At ten o'clock, however, the little party were assembled round the altar; and though the rain pattered against the windows, and the wind moaned through the branches of the old yew-tree, they felt safe and sheltered from the weather, and Mr. Morton prepared to commence the matrimonial service.

The bride and bridegroom stood before the altar ; and on Kate's left hand was Mr. Ibbotson, erect, pale, and calm,—he had evidently prepared himself for a great effort. George Hanson's face looked wild and flushed, and he glanced nervously from side to side, with a haggard inquiring eye, as if he expected yet feared to see some apparition.

When the priest asked him in the customary form whether he would have this woman to be his wedded wife, his face grew livid, his lips trembled, and it was with difficulty that he pronounced the words " I will."

Kate listened to the similar question, when put to herself, with meekness and devotion, and she uttered her response with distinctness.

The minister then said, " Who giveth this woman to be married to this man ?"

It was a question that struck to the heart of Ibbotson like a dagger. He started and trembled violently, and it was only by catching at the rail of the altar that he saved himself from falling. Poor Kate was deeply distressed ; and Hanson gazed with a vacant, unmeaning stare.

A glass of water was handed to the tutor by the clerk; he drank it with avidity, and then passing his right hand over his face and forehead, he seemed to recover himself, and, taking Kate by the hand, he performed his duty by delivering her to the priest. The ring was soon placed upon her finger, and in a few moments the ceremony was concluded.

George Hanson kissed his bride; and they then withdrew to the little vestry-room, where they signed the register. During this time, Mr. Tibbottson, who seemed to feel that his task was over, retired alone to the rustic porch of the old church, and leaning there against the wall with folded arms, he silently and sadly watched the distant group, still visible to him through the open door of the vestry-room.

At length they came forth and joined him in the porch. The rain had ceased, and a glimmering of sunshine seemed to promise a more favourable afternoon. It was now George Hanson's turn to escort Kate; and though he was spared the necessity of expanding the yellow cotton umbrella, he was obliged to submit to

the pattens, — for unless he carried his wife home on his shoulders, it was impossible she should attempt to wade through the mud without them.

London was the present destination of the bride and bridegroom. A hack-chaise had been ordered to the Rectory at eleven o'clock, which was to convey them to Danesford, and there they were to meet a coach going to the metropolis, in which two places had been secured for them. It was not exactly thus that George Hanson had anticipated leaving Mapleton with Kate, if he ever made her his wife: but his proposals had been necessarily unpremeditated and precipitate, and these arrangements, certainly well adapted to the present state of his finances, had all been made on the preceding evening by the considerate Mr. Ibbotson.

The yellow post-chaise arrived, and on it the trunks were fastened; and then Hanson, eager as soon as possible to get over so humiliating a journey, prepared to hand out his bride. But after the farewell of her brother-in-law and Fanny came that of Mrs. Podd, who long and

lovingly clung to the neck of her dear Kate, pouring forth all the anxious affection of her old heart. Again her husband prepared to depart; but Mr. Ibbotson entered the room, and, walking up to Kate, said,

“You will allow *me* to lead you to the carriage. Mr. Hanson, her father may surely claim the last word?”

Mr. Hanson coldly bowed; and Ibbotson, placing her arm within his own, took her from the house and led her slowly down the lawn.

“Adieu, my dear, dear child!” said he. “May you be happy,—so happy, that you may never know the want of a friend! and if that be the case, I’ll forgive you, even if you forget *me*. But it may be otherwise; and, oh! promise me that in any emergency, any unexpected difficulty, if you want advice or money, apply to me—to your father—to no one else! I would traverse the wide world to serve you,—I would ——” He could not utter another word,—he wept bitterly.

“Thank you for all your attention, Mr. Ibbotson,” said George Hanson coldly; and taking

Kate from his arm, he handed her into the chaise, and then got in himself.

The door was closed, and the vehicle drove off, as Kate, with tearful eyes, waved an adieu to the tutor, who stood gazing at their departure a motionless image of despair. And it was thus Kate first left the happy valley!

CHAPTER VII.

My bootmaker yearly enlarges
His bill with the growth of my calf ;
And my tailor increases his charges,
And books me " a coat and a half !"
He can't raise my small clothes,—how can he ?
Small clothes !—why, I never wear any !

WHEN they reached Danesford, the London coach had not arrived : Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, with their trunks, were therefore deposited in the travellers' room. It was fortunately unoccupied, and Kate sat herself down very comfortably by the fire. Not so her husband : he paced the room in a state of irritated excitement ; and perhaps his complacency was not augmented when, glancing from the window, he discovered that immediately opposite to this inferior inn were the lodgings once occupied by Mary Middleton and her father. He ordered

a strong glass of brandy and water, and having drunk it, he was informed that the coach was ready to start, and that all their packages were stowed away in safety.

On entering the very small coach, they found that the two seats with the backs to the horses had been reserved for them; the other places were occupied, and Hanson was *vis-à-vis* to a large woman with a baby at the breast, while Kate was opposite to an exceedingly fat man who was just finishing off the very last puffs of a cigar. Kate, who could not bear the smell of tobacco, involuntarily coughed; and the baby, who was probably equally averse to the effluvia, was screaming most violently.

"Fine morning, marm, after the rain," said the fat man to Kate. "Allow me, marm,—I'm an old traveller,—just let us pack legs before we start, and you 'll find your advantage in it. Thank you, marm,—that 's it."

Kate replied by bows and smiles, and her husband looked as if he longed to cut the fat man's throat.

"There—we're off, however, marm," said

Kate's opposite neighbour, again addressing her most familiarly. "We don't spin along as they does upon them railroads. Have you ever been upon one of them railroads, marm?"

"No, sir, I never have."

"Oh, it 's wonderful! Law! but it gave me quite a poorly sensation, here in the pit of my stomach,—so quick, you know,—just the sort of qualm one feels in a swing."

"Indeed!—not pleasant."

"Pleasant! no, you may say that: you've been in a steam-boat, I suppose, marm?"

"No, sir, never."

"Never in a steam-boat! Law! next year go that way to Greenwich fair; it 's the best way of going.—Take a cake, marm?" and he produced from his pocket, folded in a very old-looking newspaper, some gingerbread cakes which looked as if they had been sat upon.

"None, I 'm very much obliged to you," said Kate.

"I can't help thinking I know your face somewhere, marm," said the fat man, staring at his companion with a knowing smile.

"I don't think it likely, sir," said Hanson with immense dignity.

"Don't you?" replied the huge stranger with provoking indifference. "I'm sure, marm, you and I have met somewhere; but shoot me now if I can tell where!"

"I have lived a very retired life, sir, and do not think it probable that we should have met."

"Oh, I know!" said the fat man, slapping his right thigh with his right hand. "Sure enough, it warn't in a room, nor anyhow that I could speak to you; but 'twas at Manchester, at the theatre, and I was in the pit, and, I remember now, you was the pretty girl what acted Don Giovanni in tight breeches, and a hat and feathers."

"Sir," said George Hanson indignantly, "you are egregiously mistaken!—this lady is my wife, sir, and has never been in the situation you describe."

The fat man gave a loud, shrill, prolonged whistle. "Oh ho!" said he, "in the wrong box, I find, when I thought I saw the lady

from the pit :—humbly begs pardon ; no harm done, I hope.”

“ Sir, this lady is much fatigued ; and were you to have the kindness not to address her, she might enjoy some repose.”

“ Oh, by all means !—hold my tongue—mum—chance ; I ’ll take a cigar to amuse me.”

George thought that of two evils the cigar was preferable to the conversation ; so a light was procured from the pocket of the smoker, the window was opened, and the pestiferous puffing and accompanying spitting were gone through, assisted by the cough of Kate, the “ curses not loud but deep” of George, the whappings of the wet-nurse, and the screams of the baby.

“ Well, now, having done that job,” said the fat man, throwing away the remnant of his cigar, “ and the lady being rested, I hopes we may be sociable like ; for certainly nothing do wile away a journey so nice as a little conversational talk.—I say, missis !” he exclaimed, addressing the nurse of the squalling babe, “ give it the breast ;” and then, turning to Kate, he

added, "Children must be suckled, marm; though 'tant always pleasant to titty 'em afore folks."

George was preparing an attack; but Kate pressed his hand, and whispered an entreaty that he would not say anything to her fat friend, as he meant nothing uncivil and really did not annoy her. He therefore shrugged his shoulders, and, leaning back in his corner, endeavoured to go to sleep.

"They do say at home, marm, that I be getting too corpulent: you don't think so, do you? I hate skinny, bony people, for my part, and think I'm just right. But, law! they want me to take that new doctor's pills."

Kate had nothing to say, but continued to act intelligence.

"But, deary-me! marm, they give his pills in such lots! Lord knows how many at night, and just as many again in the morning! How should you like that, marm?"

"Indeed, sir, I never take pills, and really do not think I could take them in the way you describe."

"How can you, sir, talk such stuff to a lady!" cried George, opening his eyes and glaring at the unfortunate fat man. "What can it signify to her what your complaints are, or what your remedies?"

"Deary-me! well, I'm sure I meant no harm; but if the lady has a delicate stomach, I'm glad you mentioned it, and I'll regulate my talk accordingly."

Again Kate in a low voice tried to pacify her indignant spouse, and once more he closed his eyes and receded into his corner.

As soon as Hanson's eyes were shut, the fat man made a ludicrously solemn face at Kate, winked his eye, and jerked his thumb at her husband. In vain she tried to avoid laughing, but the effort only made the matter worse, and George Hanson was now aroused by hearing, and then seeing, his wife joining the unaccountable fat man in a violent and almost hysterical fit of laughter.

"Tant at *you*, by no means, sir," said the fat man as soon as he could articulate.

"It never occurred to me that it was, sir,"

said Hanson proudly ; and then, turning to his wife, he added, "My dear, in a public conveyance you really should not joke with every stranger you meet : I must get a place outside if this continues."

"Oh, pray do not leave me here alone !" said Kate : "I really want to go to sleep ; and if no one speaks to me, I shall rest very quietly in this corner."

She soon pretended to be asleep, and acted her part to admiration, until she discovered that her fat and facetious neighbour had actually fallen into a profound slumber. In this he continued until they arrived at their journey's end. They were put down at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, where they slept that night, and the next morning Mr. Hanson went out to secure lodgings.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh, leave me to my sorrow,
For my heart is oppress'd to-day ;
Oh, leave me, and to-morrow
Dark shadows may pass away.
There's a time when all that grieves us
Is felt with a deeper gloom ;
There's a time when hope deceives us,
And we dream of bright days to come.

The lodgings taken by Mr. Hanson were in an obscure street in Westminster : nothing could be more dirty and comfortless than the apartments, and the look-out was dreary in the extreme.

The lower part of the house was occupied by the landlord and landlady, and their very numerous family. These good people professed to cook for the lodgers, and "promiscuously to wait upon them," as they themselves expressed it.

When Kate rang the bell, it never seemed to be answered by the same person twice : every branch of the family apparently claimed its turn, and went up to have a look at the new lodgers.

It struck Kate as a singular circumstance that every individual of this very large family should address her as Mrs. Anson. Such an error committed by one or two, or even three, might have passed unnoticed ; but when the husband, and the wife, and the children, male and female, from the grown-up ones down to the little scramblers, all united in calling her Mrs. Anson, it did appear strange, and she resolved to speak to Mr. Hanson about it.

As soon as he came in, she did so.

" Well, my dear," said he, " don't you know that among people of their grade, whole families frequently drop their *His* ?"

" Do they ?" replied Kate : " it is very disagreeable."

" To be sure they do," replied her husband ; " and I remember noticing the other day, that they called ' house,' ' ouse,' and ' ham,' ' am.'"

“ Indeed ! Oh, well, that accounts for it,” said Kate. “ But you look tired, my love ? ”

“ I am,” replied George : “ I wish we were out of London.”

“ Oh, I’m sure, so do I.”

“ I must try to contrive it ; but I am harassed and annoyed here by a hundred things you know nothing about.”

“ May I not know them ? and then, perhaps, I may be a comfort to you ? ”

“ Oh, no ; you could do no good : but if we can once get clear of London, we shall be as happy as possible, dear Kate.”

On the following Monday, the little bills incidental to Kate’s first week of housekeeping came in ; and, to her surprise and annoyance, she observed that every one of them was addressed to Mrs. Anson.

“ This is too provoking ! ” thought she : “ that the vulgar mispronunciation of our landlord’s family should give us a false name in the neighbourhood, is really annoying.”

It was necessary that she should have a personal interview with the washerwoman, to

discuss the prices to be charged for particular articles; and when Kate heard her distinctly discourse about silk handkerchiefs and cambric habit-shirts, she thought that, in this instance at least, there could be no reason why she should submit to have the initiatory *H* omitted in her own name.

"My name is Hanson, not Anson, my good woman," said she.

"Hanson! — I'm sure I beg your pardon! Dear me! I was told—"

"Oh, yes; the people below pronounce it wrong; — they always leave out their *He*. But, pray, remember."

"Oh, certainly, ma'am. And some of your things is marked K. H. I wonder it didn't strike me. I shan't forget, you may depend on it."

During her husband's absence that morning, two letters arrived by the twopenny post and were left upon the drawing-room table. Kate entered the room before his return, and, scarcely knowing what she was about, glanced at the directions. Could she believe her eyes! — they were both addressed to G. Anson, Esq.!

There was then a mystery; it was not accidental their being misnamed by their tradespeople, and by every member of their landlord's family.

Poor Kate was dreadfully alarmed; and when her husband returned, he found her in tears. As soon as she could articulate the cause of her alarm, she did so; and George Hanson, throwing himself back in a chair, exclaimed,

“ I knew it must come to this, Kate ! The concealment, — or rather the attempt, and a poor one it has proved, — was rendered necessary by my difficulties. I have been in daily dread of being arrested, and I know not how soon the event may take place.”

“ My dear George,” cried Kate, “ is there anything I can do for you ?”

“ Nothing, my love; nothing : — only be prepared for the worst; and should anything occur, be not cast down.”

It was difficult for poor Kate to anticipate evil and at the same time to keep up her spirits; but she did her best, and Hanson's

home was generally cheerful when, after his frequent and prolonged absences, he returned to it.

They were sitting at breakfast one morning, when the door of the room was opened by the maid-servant, and two men immediately pushed violently past her and stood before the astonished couple.

"You must come along with us, Mr. Hanson," said the man who appeared most responsible of the two: "I've a writ against you from Messrs. Scriggs and Verjuice."

"Indeed!" said Hanson, much agitated. "Must I go with you?—I—I really am in my slippers and dressing-gown."

"Oh! my follower will wait, and will walk with you to Snivell's, or wherever you choose to be taken, and I shall see you when you get there."

So the principal, who was a sheriff's officer, took himself off, and Hanson was left in the custody of the very shabby and disagreeable-looking "bum."

"What does this mean, George?" cried

Kate, starting up and throwing her arms round him, as he was preparing to put on his boots and coat.

“ I am arrested, Kate, and must go with this man ; but all will be settled to-morrow, be assured it will.”

“ Then, I must go with you.”

“ Impossible ! You must stay here to endeavour to keep up appearances ; say, I am gone out of town for a day or two ;—keep up your spirits, and all will be well.”

“ Keep up my spirits !—Oh, George, without you, that will be impossible : it is cruelty not to let me go with you ; I should be so much happier there with you, than here by myself !”

“ It cannot be, Kate,” replied George. “ I am ready now ; I suppose I may leave the house first, and you will be content to keep me in sight on the opposite side of the street ?”

“ Certainly,” replied the bailiff’s follower. “ I suppose as how you ’ll go to Snivell’s ? it ’s a neat consarn, just off Chancery-lane.”

“ Anywhere ; that house will do as well as

any other. Good-b'ye, Kate;—nay, don't cry! I shall be back to-morrow: there, sit down;—kiss me once more.”

And George Hanson left the house, slowly followed by his watchful attendant.

Poor Kate sat down and wept bitterly; but she soon roused herself, and tried to think of some effort which she could make to remedy the difficulty. Should she write to Mr. Ibbotson? he had strictly enjoined her to apply to him in any embarrassment. But she knew not how much money would be required to relieve George from his present state of duurance; and as it was requisite to know all particulars before she could address her liberal friend, she resolved to follow her husband to the house the man had spoken of. She therefore ordered a coach, and drove to Mr. Saivella's, in a street branching from Chancery-lane.

It is easy to appear sweet-tempered, when nothing has occurred to sour us,—when friends are accommodating, acquaintances flattering, and when all goes on precisely as we could wish.

There are, indeed, "born-devils" in the world, who sully the brightness of prosperity by eternally throwing in the unkind words prompted by their own internal bitterness of disposition: but such unamiable beings are rare; and we again assert, that under the sunshine of the world it is easy to look cheerful.

But Kate's temper was one that would stand the trying test of adversity. She did not smile upon her husband only when he had smiles for her, and had the power of lavishing upon her the many comforts and luxuries that form the earthly paradise of woman's life. Nor was it only when his character appeared in its best colours that she would speak the words of kindness and affection. She was not the wife who would add to the gloom of a dark hour by saying, "You have caused this darkness."

Kate knew not how far her husband had been to blame in the transactions which led to his embarrassments. She certainly had her suspicions that all was not right; but she did not consider the time of trouble the time for accu-

sation and reproof. Indeed, such words were not in Kate's vocabulary; and were she in a brighter hour to feel it her duty to expostulate with her husband, it would be done with gentleness and moderation; with a pressure of the hand and a kind smile, she would give assurance of forgiveness even while she spoke of error. She was not like the banker's wife, who, the very day his bank broke, nearly broke his heart by taunting him with his absurd imprudence in throwing a guinea to a beggar in mistake for a shilling, five-and-twenty years before.

Kate entered the sponging-house without a tear. She embraced her husband, who seemed distressed and annoyed at her presence, and at once proposed applying to Mr. Ibbotson, requesting to know the sum that would be requisite.

"Oh, Kate, that will never do!" said Hanson; "no, no,—we shall require your poor pittance to make us comfortable hereafter."

"But I cannot leave you here,—I cannot, indeed, George."

“I assure you I shall be liberated to-morrow,” replied he with an affectation of carelessness; “and you see I am in comfortable quarters.”

Kate looked round with a shudder. The room was showily furnished, but every bright article was tarnished, and the appearance of the sofa was such that she would rather have died of fatigue in her chair than have reclined upon it. The window was defended with strong iron bars, and it looked out into a small paved yard, which was entirely covered by a cage of iron, under which some poor squalid beings were lounging, imagining that the air did them good.

The waiter entered the room, and Hanson told him he was expecting two gentlemen, and that port and sherry and biscuits must be provided for them. The man demanded the money, which was given to him, and he departed to procure the articles wanted.

“So you see, Kate, I must bid you adieu,” said Hanson. “The men I expect are no companions for you, but it is with them that I

must settle my liberation ; so go home, like a good girl, and keep quiet until you see me."

"Must I indeed leave you?" said Kate: "I cannot bear to go!" and her tears fell like rain on the shoulder of her husband.

"Yes, Kate, indeed you must.—Here, waiter, a hackney-coach for this lady immediately."

"Indeed, indeed, if you would only let me stay all night, I would be so quiet! I would not interfere with you, or with those gentlemen who are coming.—Dear George, let me stay!"

"The coach is at the door, sir."

"That is right," said Hanson, enveloping Kate in her cloak. "Good night, dearest,—put this lady into the coach,—good night."

And poor Kate was thrust against her will, sobbing, into the hackney-coach, and driven back alone to her comfortless lodging.

CHAPTER IX.

Oh, when the tide was out last night,
* In yonder bay we roved,—
We gather'd shells, and on the sand
We wrote the names we loved :
And now we wander forth and find
No dear memorial there,—
The morning tide effaced the words
We traced with so much care.

'Tis thus with all who rest their hope
Upon the sands of earth,—
As fleeting is love's history,
Its mourning and its mirth.
Time's ceaseless tide at intervals
Will rush o'er all the scene,—
'Twill pass, and not a record then
Will tell where they have been.

WHEN Kate reached her apartments, she was very soon visited by her landlady, who appeared suddenly to have mastered the pronun-

ciation of the letter *H*, and addressed her most distinctly as Mrs. Hanson.

“I’m glad, Mrs. Hanson, at least to see you returned, which was almost more than I expected; and you’ll please not to forget that there’s near a fortnight’s rent due.”

“I am not likely to forget it,” replied Kate; “but our agreement was to pay monthly.”

“Oh, paying monthly’s all very well,” said the landlady, “when one knows who’s who; but when people goes by fictitious names, it becomes suspicious, and I gets suspicious too. However, I’m glad one of you’s come back again.”

“Surely you could be under no apprehension about your rent, when we had left all our boxes in your house?”

“Oh, boxes are just boxes, and not worth much; and I know well enough that people who go by two names think nothing of filling trunks with brickbats. Oh dear me! it’s a difficult matter for us as lets lodgings to be up to all the swindling ways of this here town!”

"I'll thank you to leave me," said Kate, cut to the heart by this allusion to swindling.

"Oh, certainly. Are we to expect Mr. Hanson to-night?"

"No, not to-night," replied the forlorn wife, tears rolling down her pale cheeks; "but in the morning, I believe—I hope he will return."

"I hope so too, I'm sure," said the woman, and left the room banging the door.

Kate walked up and down her room until a late hour, and then, exhausted and fatigued, went to bed and slept soundly till the morning.

At an early hour her husband returned. The two associates who were on the preceding evening to partake of his port and sherry in the sponging-house were money-lenders; and having, by a ruinous sacrifice, obtained sufficient ready cash to extricate himself from his present difficulty, he hastened home to prepare for an immediate departure from London, lest other claimants, hearing of his arrest and the payment of the money, should resort to similar measures, in the hope of a similar result.

The luggage was speedily arranged, the rent and the few unpaid bills were settled, and by a night-coach they started from London on their way to Bristol.

To Kate, who had hitherto led a life of calm unvarying tranquillity, these dreadful alarms and rapid changes were most distressing; and when she thought of their having for so many days passed under a feigned name, she felt degraded and humiliated.

As they proceeded further and further from the metropolis, Hanson's spirits rose: at almost every stage he called for brandy-and-water; and, there being no other passengers in the coach, he jested on the subject of his recent arrest, laughing wildly and immoderately; and the exhilaration was so evidently the result of his strong potations, that Kate would have been thankful for the presence of her fat Danesford companion, or indeed of any person who might have proved some restraint upon the untimely and exuberant gaiety of her husband.

On their arrival at Bristol at an early hour on a miserable rainy morning, Kate, utterly worn

out, retired to bed; and Hanson went out to inquire about the departure of the Tenby steam-packet, it being his intention to proceed to that retired and agreeable watering-place.

His arrangements were soon made; and on the following morning, they embarked on board a small steam-vessel destined for the port of Tenby.

It was Kate's first appearance on the boards of anything in the shape of a boat; and though she enjoyed the beautiful scenery through which they glided as they passed down the river, no sooner did they enter the channel, than all the disagreeable sensations which are apt to attack novices in such a situation overcame her, and she soon lay prostrate on the deck, enveloped in cloaks.

Her husband paced backwards and forwards without suffering any inconvenience from the motion of the vessel; and, the wind being fair, he assured her that the voyage would be a short one. Fortunately for the sufferer it proved so, and they landed at Tenby in a

shorter period than was usually occupied by the voyage.

Furnished lodgings were immediately procured, very small, but so neat, clean, and comfortable, that Kate felt once more happy, especially as George seemed to recover his spirits, and to lose that anxious, feverish disquietude which had perpetually harassed him in London.

"Well, Kate," said he, "do you think you can be happy in this quiet place?"

"If you are happy and contented, George, I am sure I shall be so. The place is beautiful; and I delight in the homely cleanliness of our abode. But now, dearest, do not be offended with me if I ask you what income we have to spend here: anything is better than getting into difficulties. I think you hardly give me credit for being the good manager which I trust you will find me; and now only tell me with candour precisely what income we have to depend upon, and I will make it my study to make it answer."

"Dearest Kate," replied George affection-

ately, "you are too good—oh, how much better than I deserve ! Our income will be small."

"Never mind, George ; only conceal nothing from me."

He started and looked confused ; but in a moment he replied,

"To tell you the truth, your own income is at present all that we can depend upon."

"And is it not amply sufficient, George?" replied Kate. "Yes, I am sure it is ; nay, beyond what we shall actually require here : only leave the management of our little income to me, and, depend on it, you shall never feel the want of anything."

"Most willingly shall I leave all to you : it is your own income, dear Kate, and I know it will be a pleasure to you to provide for your poor husband. Times may, however, mend with him, and he may live to repay you."

"Oh, talk not of repayment ; how happy we shall be !—and no mysteries, George, —no concealment of our real names ?"

"No, no, Kate ; there can be no necessity here, in this remote place—I cannot dread——"

"Dread what?" inquired Kate anxiously.

"Nothing: I say that *here* I have no fears."

"Then I shall be quite happy: anything is better than the feeling that one is trying perpetually to deceive, and carrying for ever a disgraceful mystery in one's bosom; do you not think so?"

"I!" replied Hanson: "of course; horrible — most horrible! — a hell upon earth!" He struck his forehead violently with his hand and left the room.

Kate was beginning to get accustomed to her husband's wayward and violent temper: she wiped away a tear when he thus abruptly left her, and then endeavoured to forget his roughness, and to occupy her mind by attending diligently to the arrangements of her little establishment. Nothing again chanced to give their conversation a similar turn: George Hanson became tranquil and affectionate in his manner, and never seemed so happy as when wandering on the cliffs or sands with his pretty Kate, or reading to her in the evening while she sat at work.

Kate was truly happy; she forgot every former wild eccentricity of her husband which had caused her pain and anxiety, and became more attached to him than ever.

A young couple of elegant and prepossessing appearance, living so blameless and domestic a life, were not likely to pass unnoticed in so small a society as that of Tenby. They were for some time talked of over the evening card-tables, analysed, and approved; and, after a prudent delay, the clergyman with his lady called to pay their respects. They found both Kate and her husband at home; and after a rather prolonged morning visit, they took leave highly pleased with the young couple, and that evening had an opportunity of promulgating over the board of green cloth, the very favourable impression they had received.

Mr. and Mrs. Hanson took an early opportunity of returning the good clergyman's visit; and again Mr. and Mrs. Mildman were in raptures with their new acquaintances, and failed not again to be eloquent in their praise.

Other visitors soon called at Clematis Cot-

tage — (such was the summery title of the humble abode of the Hansons'): their visits were in due course of time returned; and then came invitations for *soirées*, and even for quadrille parties. The young couple availed themselves of these inducements to vary the monotony of their lives, and they soon became highly popular with the *élite* of Tenby.

And thus most pleasantly passed their summer hours, with occasional boating parties, or rides and drives to Pembroke or Milford-Haven; and their evenings agreeably varied between their own happy and innocent *tête-à-têtes*, and the sociable parties of their hospitable and agreeable neighbours.

Kate's rides and drives were soon put a stop to, for she was declared to be in the family way. To her astonishment and mortification, the announcement of this interesting fact to her husband excited the first ebullition of temper which he had given way to for months: the intelligence seemed to cause him the most serious annoyance, and he was heard to exclaim, "Poor little helpless in-

nocent babe ! the penalty will be thine, and I cannot bear to think of it."

Kate was frightened and distressed at conduct so utterly unaccountable : but her husband seemed speedily to feel ashamed of his unguarded vehemence, and he evidently tried to make amends by paying the most affectionate attention to his wife.

Sensitive as was Kate when spoken to with unkindness, she was even more easily touched by a word or even a look of affection. She forgot the strange words of her husband, and gave herself up to the quiet enjoyment of his society, refusing for the present all invitations, and spending her happy mornings in sitting by his side beneath some romantic rocks, or wandering slowly, supported by his arm, along the level sands.

Perhaps these were the happiest days that George and Kate ever passed together ; certain it is that in after years they both looked back upon them with fond regret.

CHAPTER X.

Oh, they were happy together—no word
 Of unkindness between them was then ever heard:
 He seem'd in her eyes to interpret her thought,
 And all that she wish'd for came ere it was sought.
 How gay was the laugh of their innocent mirth!
 Oh, they were happy!—too happy for earth!

As the period of Kate's confinement approached, George Hanson's attention and kindness increased; he seldom left her, was always ready to accompany her in a walk, or to enter into any little plan which her fancy suggested. The errors of his disposition appeared to be thoroughly reformed, and his love for her seemed to know no bounds. Kate was indeed truly happy, and rewarded his affectionate devotion by smiles of grateful love and words of tenderness.

Like most women who are about to have

come mothers for the first time, she had occasional misgivings respecting the result of the trial that awaited her; but her spirits were generally good, and, educated in habits of fervent and unaffected piety, she placed her reliance on the mercy of Providence, and murmured with sincerity, "God's will be done!"

One bright and beautiful day she expressed a wish to visit a rocky promontory which is situated close to the western sands, and which at high tide becomes an island, entirely surrounded by water.

George Hanson cheerfully acquiesced in her proposal, and they slowly sauntered towards their resting-place, Kate leaning on his arm, while in the other hand he carried a basket of provisions and a book. They selected a green spot, on the side of the rock most distant from Tenby, overlooking the wide sea, and the distant island of Caldy. Kate reclined tranquilly on the turf, and her husband read to her. They then opened their little portable larder, and made an excellent dinner.

George from time to time looked anxiously on his wife, and after a silence of many minutes he detected tears silently coursing one another down her pale cheek.

“Good God, Kate!” he anxiously exclaimed, “are you in pain? are you ill? Let us return to the town instantly, and send for your medical attendant.”

“I am quite well this evening, dearest George,” replied Kate, taking his hand and fondly kissing it: “but did happiness never make you weep? intense happiness? such as I have felt to-day, such as I always feel when you are near me?”

“Dear Kate, you are nervous: you must not let your feelings overcome you.”

“Nay, George,” she answered, “these tears do me good; and surely when I tell you their source they must gratify you. Oh! you have been so kind, so considerate—you have made me so happy! and remember that I have told you so,—for should I be very ill, should I not recover, it will be—it must be a source of great consolation to you to remember that I

was sensible of your invariable attention, and grateful for your affection."

"Oh! Kate, do not speak thus, — you will kill me if you do! You are strong and well, and should not suffer your mind to be depressed by these gloomy apprehensions."

"I am not depressed, dear George; but I cannot believe any woman in my situation for the first time can be insensible to the danger that awaits her. I might conceal my thoughts, and I will do so if you desire it; but it does me good to express what I feel; and I am sure, were I snatched from you, the recollection of what I have said would be a comfort to you."

"Nothing would console me, Kate: and I cannot endure to hear you talk thus!"

"Only one word, dear George, and I have done," said Kate. "Should I perish and my child live, I would wish that it should be placed under my sister's care. Not that I mean to separate it from you, save in those helpless days when it would be a burthen to a man,

and when it requires the watchful tenderness of a female nurse. When it grows up, George, it will be a comfort to you, especially if it be a boy; and I would have you call him George: let him grow up another George Hanson."

Her husband was dreadfully agitated. "Another George Hanson!" he exclaimed: "oh, misery!"

"What do you mean, George?" inquired Kate.

"Mean? Oh! surely you would not name him another George Hanson, with all his father's faults!"

"Nay, George, your conduct to me would atone for a thousand early errors: let him be George Hanson."

"George Hanson;—yes, he shall be christened George. But do not talk of my conduct to you, Kate: were I to drain my father's blood for you, how little would it atone for the past!"

"I know not what you mean, George," said Kate; "nor do I think you know your-

self.—But do look at the sky ! What an extraordinary sunset, and what magnificent clouds, some black as ink, and edged with burnished gold !”

“ It is indeed most awfully beautiful ; but I fear it betokens a coming storm. See how rapidly the dark clouds gather ; the wind rises, too ; and the ocean, which was recently so calm, is foaming and bursting into tremendous waves.”

“ Hark !” said Kate : “ what a peal of distant thunder ! Had we not better hasten towards home ?”

“ We must leave this place, certainly,” replied her husband. “ But you must not hurry yourself : we shall have time to reach our shelter before the bursting of the storm.”

“ Oh, what a fearful flash of lightning !” cried Kate in terror, as her husband gathered up his book and basket, and then supported her over the rock.

“ Do not be frightened, Kate,” said he : “ once on level ground, we shall get on famously.”

They had now reached the side of the rock nearest to the town, and, preparing to descend the path, they looked down below them, and to their dismay discovered that the tide had begun to rise, and the island was already entirely surrounded by the agitated waters, which increased rapidly every moment.

"Never mind, Kate," said George, endeavouring to conceal his own anxiety: "I shall be able with ease to wade through the water, and can carry you in my arms without your even wetting your feet."

Again the forked lightning flashed around them, and the thunder seemed to burst immediately upon the isolated rock.

"Oh, George, I shall never recover this!" exclaimed Kate faintly, and clinging in terror to his arm.

"Nay, cheer up!" he replied: "we have now reached the bottom of the cliff. We have not a moment to lose: trust yourself entirely to me, and fear nothing."

He raised her in his arms, carrying her as a nurse would carry a sleeping child. She lay

across his arms, and elevating them as high as he could, he stepped boldly into the raging waters, and rapidly prepared to cross the now not inconsiderable encroachment of the tide; but it was much deeper than he expected, for in the middle it reached considerably above his waist, and so rough and boisterous were the billows, that it was with difficulty he could avoid being thrown down,—and had this happened, the destruction of both would have been inevitable.

Poor Kate, who felt him repeatedly swerve and stagger under his load, was perfectly aware of her danger; but, though she trembled like an aspen leaf, she spoke not one word.

Still George struggled on, and after much difficulty succeeded in reaching the dry sands: but he paused not for one moment, nor did he put down his precious burthen, but walking on through the town with her in his arms, he at length reached his own habitation, and carrying her upstairs, laid her carefully on her bed.

"How shall I thank you, George?" said Kate, bursting into hysteric tears.

"By being perfectly quiet, Kate. Are you wet? you must be; change your things directly."

"I will, if you will do the same," replied Kate. "Hark! how the rain beats against the window!—oh, what a terrific storm! Change your clothes this instant, George."

To pacify Kate, he did as he was desired; and she, having got rid of her garments, which were saturated with the spray of the sea, was put into a warm bed.

She still seemed restless, feverish, and uncomfortable, and George sat in silence by her bedside; but when she complained of feeling seriously unwell, he ran out to summon her medical attendant.

If a husband be really devotedly attached to his young wife, nothing can be more trying than his lonely watching during the hours of her first confinement. Not permitted to approach her, his imagination magnifies her

danger, and every noise he hears is interpreted as some gloomy omen.

For many hours George Hanson paced the narrow limits of his little drawing-room, now rushing to the foot of the staircase to listen, and then wondering at the continued silence, and almost giving audible utterance to his heart's anxiety. He looked at her unfinished embroidery, at the book which they had last read together and the drawing she had last completed, and he said to himself, " Shall I ever see her thus employed again !"

At length the doctor came down to relieve his anxiety : Kate had been safely delivered of a fine boy, and both mother and child were going on well.

George Hanson could not utter his thanks ; and when he was quietly admitted into the chamber adjoining that in which Kate was lying, and his first-born was put into his arms, he wept as if he had himself been a child. He seemed to look upon his boy with a strange feeling of melancholy, kissing him again and

again, and murmuring, "Poor innocent! a hard fate is thine! Canst thou ever love thy wretched father?"

The nurse and the doctor reproved him for giving way to this excitement, assuring him that it was absolutely necessary that his wife should be kept perfectly quiet. The baby was rescued from his arms, and he was desired to descend to the drawing-room. He unwillingly obeyed; and, worn out with watching and anxiety, he threw himself on the sofa, and soon fell fast asleep.

How tranquil and deep is the slumber we enjoy after hours of trembling solicitude for the safety of one who is most dear to us! George slept for many hours: on awaking, his first eager inquiry was for Kate, and he was told that she and her baby were also enjoying a most tranquil and salutary repose.

He partook hastily of an early dinner, and then went out to walk alone upon the beautiful cliffs. There were no traces of the storm of the preceding night; the sun shone bril-

liantly, the sky was serene and cloudless, and the ocean was again lulled into that faithless calm, which, like the bland smile of an ill-tempered man, would almost persuade you that there are no such things as waves and whirlwinds, frowns and invective !

CHAPTER XI.

Crime ! there is one will trace thee !

Crime ! there is one will find thee !

Hide where thou wilt,

The record of guilt,

The avenger still will chase thee !

When the day of alarm is ending,

And thy dark career seems tending

To brighter ways

And innocent days,

Detection is impending.

KATE rapidly recovered her strength, and to her great joy was able to nurse her child. In a very few weeks the husband and wife were again walking to their favourite haunts, and with them was the maid-servant, who carried their precious treasure in her arms.

They had now resided at Tenby more than a twelvemonth ; and so kind and friendly were many of their more opulent neighbours that

they began to get attached to their home, and resolved to continue there. Kate's moderate income was regularly paid quarterly, and it amply sufficed to defray every expense of their economical establishment. George appeared to receive no remittances: indeed, he had never once, to Kate's knowledge, received a letter by the post since he had resided there. Some wives might have begun to wonder and make a premature grievance of what certainly was mysterious: but Kate was perfectly happy; her husband was invariably kind and attentive to her, and what could she wish for more? He appeared exceedingly fond of his little boy; and yet he always looked dejected when he was lying on his lap: indeed, Kate often detected a tear which stole from the father's eye, as he supposed unnoticed, and fell upon the long white drapery of the infant.

She could not account for this,—unless, indeed, it was caused by regret that early extravagance had deprived him of the satisfaction of hereafter bestowing upon his son the advantages of wealth. This she thought must

be the origin of his melancholy, and she sympathised with him, and honoured him for so natural a feeling.

The day of their boy's christening, usually one of quiet domestic rejoicing, was passed by Hanson in a state of extraordinary excitement; and their friend Mr. Mildman, who officiated on the occasion, appeared alarmed at his gloom and eccentricity. Mr. Ibbotson had written to Kate to request that he might be permitted to stand godfather; Fanny also offered to be his godmother; and Mr. Mildman, who had for some months been on the most intimate terms with them, undertook to be the other sponsor.

The child, with Hanson's concurrence, was christened George Ibbotson; a compliment which Kate thought due to the excellent tutor, particularly as he had sent his godchild a very handsome present.

Her husband's extraordinary agitation occasioned her the first grief and anxiety which she had experienced for many months, if we except her natural fears previous to her mar-

finement ; but the day of the ceremony once passed, his gloom and agitation began to subside, and at the expiration of a week, he resumed his usual cheerfulness, and entered again with interest into their old pursuits.

Mr. Mildman, who had privately spoken to Kate respecting her husband's unusual excitement, naturally attributed it to indisposition ; and now that they both saw him tranquil and cheerful as in former days, they decided that he had indeed been suffering from illness, and the circumstance was soon forgotten.

Again did sweet domestic days succeed one another with a blest monotony. But such monotonous bliss becomes sadly dull and uninteresting in description ; and we are not going to weary the reader with details of everyday occurrences. We will ask him to imagine that four years have passed away, and to believe that at the expiration of the fifth year of their residence at Tenby, Mr. and Mrs. Hanson were as happy in the tranquil enjoyment of each other's society as they were at the period of the birth of little George.

He was now a fine healthy boy of four years old, walking about most manfully, and talking, in the opinion of his fond parents, like a little oracle.

To prevent confusion, as Kate was accustomed to call his papa George, the little fellow was designated Georgy. He was idolised by both his parents, but never was there a child less spoilt: young as he was, a regular system of education had already been adopted, and he had been taught to regard the feelings of other people ere he gratified any personal want, so that selfishness was to him unknown. His father, who evidently doted upon him, was most anxious to correct every wilful error, every act of insubordination, and at four years old, never was there a more manageable boy than Georgy,—and certainly never was there one who enjoyed himself more, or who more dearly loved his parents.

Georgy always told the truth,—he might be trusted anywhere. If he committed a fault, with a frank uncompromising manner, when accused, he instantly acknowledged it. The

imputation of telling a falsehood would plunge him in the deepest grief; and to know that he was trusted, would flush his cheek with honest pride.

Most happy were George and Kate in the possession of such a child; and in the superintendence of his early studies, or in partaking his many games, their hours passed rationally and profitably.

The families who had paid them unlooked-for attention when first they came to reside at Tenby, had now become attached to them; and the intimate acquaintances of former days had in many instances ripened into friendships.

George Hanson now appeared to be perfectly happy, and while watching the sports of his boy, he said to Kate, "What more can I desire than thus to end my days in this retired home?"

What more indeed could he desire! But, alas! it is in such calm hours of seeming security that a dreadful retribution is often demanded for the crimes of the years that are gone!

Mr. and Mrs. Hanson received an invitation to a ball, from a lady who had always paid them the most considerate attention, and who was a leading personage at Tenby. They intimated their intention of waiting on her; and as it was unnecessary for them to leave home before the hour when little Georgy would be fast asleep, no anxiety was felt on his account.

They repaired to the mansion of their hostess when her rooms were about half filled with company; and as both Kate and George were well acquainted with almost every person present, they soon separated, and were both engaged in conversation with different groups of friends.

It so happened that Kate glanced towards her husband; and, to her astonishment, she saw him leaning against the wall of the apartment, his lips and cheeks pale as ashes, his bloodshot eyes apparently avoiding some unwelcome object, and his hands convulsively and unconsciously grasping at the folds of his waistcoat.

She started up in dismay, and, approaching him, entreated him to tell her the cause of his agitation :—but he motioned her away, and though his lips moved, she heard no sound. She then turned round and looked towards the spot which her husband's eyes seemed so anxiously to avoid ; and leaning against the chimney-piece immediately opposite to where they stood, she saw a tall, respectable, clerical-looking man, who, with his arms folded, fixed a stern, unshrinking, scornful glance on George Hanson.

“ What can this mean ? ” she exclaimed. “ George, for God's sake tell me what is the matter with you ! who is that stranger whose scrutiny seems so unaccountably to unman you ? George, you are observed by the whole room : come home with me,—I shall quit this place immediately ! ”

“ What did you say ? ” exclaimed Hanson, taking a long breath, as if recovering from a trance. “ Home ?—yes—let us go :—bid farewell to no one ; no one will greet us to-morrow.”

"I cannot interpret these words, George," said Kate. "You are ill—come with me at once."

And Kate led the way from the hall, and followed by her husband, who seemed like a weak or drunken man, and with their arms closed upon them, the stern, mighty, and haughty stranger continued to pursue him.

He spoke not during their short dialogue, but leant back in the carriage, his right hand pressed firmly against his forehead and eyes. When they arrived at their lodgings, he hastily entered the house, without waiting to assist Kate, and he rushed to his chamber room and locked himself in. In vain did Kate knock and entreat for admission; he answered her with a stern and angry refusal, and after many ineffectual attempts to soothe him, she retired to the nursery, and wept over the little crib of the slumbering Georgy.

Several hours passed, and still her husband came not to their chamber. At last she again crept softly down stairs and listened at his door; and she heard him restlessly pacing the

room, and occasionally uttering mournful and incoherent exclamations.

She did not venture again to summon him, but retired once more to the couch of her child; and there she watched and wept until daylight stole through the white window-curtains, and still George Hanson came not.

The next morning she prepared breakfast as usual; but her husband did not come forth to partake of that once social meal: he sent word that he was suffering from a severe headach, and requested she would send him some tea to his dressing-room. She of course complied with his wishes; and the long day passed without his for one moment seeking her society, nor did he come forth from his dressing-room that night.

“Is it possible that I can have said or done anything to offend him!” thought Kate. “No; nothing could exceed his affectionate attention immediately before this strange fit seized him. That stranger! who can he be?—there must be some dreadful mystery!”

The next day was Sunday; and Kate, as

was her invariable custom, went to church and occupied one of the seats, which had been appropriated to their use ever since their first residence in Tenby; and they were situated in the very midst of her many friends and acquaintances.

When the service was over and the congregation rose to leave the church, Kate, as had always been her habit, looked round to interchange kind looks and smiles with those she knew: but, to her astonishment, though all eyes were at the moment directed towards her, they were hastily withdrawn the instant she prepared to give a glance of recognition, and not one of her female acquaintances took the slightest notice of her. She sank down in the seat she had occupied, mortified and cut to the heart. Those who had thus wounded her feelings soon left the church, and then poor Kate rose and feebly walked down the aisle. As she passed the door of the vestry-room, Mr. Mildman stood so near her that it was impossible for her to pass him without recognition: she curtied, and Mrs. Mildman

bowed most coldly. She then inquired for the good clergyman's wife : his manner became more reserved as he uttered a very brief reply.

" Mr. Hanson is very far from well, sir," said Kate.

Mr. Mildman bowed and made no reply.

" He really alarms me," Kate added, " and I should feel very grateful if you would call on him."

" It is my duty to call on him," replied the clergyman, " and it was my intention to do so this day ; and I shall call in about an hour."

" I will tell my husband to expect you," said Kate ; and she left the church, while Mr. Mildman looked after her, utterly unable to decide whether she was an object of censure or commiseration. When she returned home, she found George Hanson in the drawing-room ; and, forgetting everything but the delight of seeing him again, she ran up to him, and, embracing him, exclaimed,

" Dearest George, how happy I am to be

allowed to speak to you ! Oh, how could you have the cruelty to avoid *me* ?”

“ Never wonder at my cruelty, Kate,” he replied : “ it has equalled my love—and nothing can exceed that.”

“ Say that,” cried Kate, “ and I care for nothing.”

“ You have been to church ?”

“ I have.”

“ And our friends—were they there ? Did they—did they inquire for me ?”

“ No, George ; they—they did not seem to see me.”

“ Speak out, Kate ; do not conceal from me the worst : it is merely what I expected,—they cut you ?”

“ Alas ! they did.”

“ All ?”

“ All except Mr. Mildman, who is coming here to see you.”

“ I will not admit him,—why should I ?—And yet, on second thoughts, I would fain know all that has been said. I will see him, Kate : but you must not appear,—remember,

I would not on any account permit you to meet him."

"I have no wish to do so," replied Kate; and hearing a knock at the door, she immediately retired to her room.

Mr. Mildman remained with George Hanson about an hour, and when about to depart, as he descended the small staircase, it was impossible for Kate to avoid hearing his parting words.

"I now leave you, Mr. Hanson, having said all that I thought it my duty to say. As you refuse to confide in me, it is of course utterly impossible for me to know whether you are guilty or innocent. Your accuser is now far away; but I must say, that your visible alarm and agitation were calculated to convince all who saw you, that you were guilty, and in dread of detection. We shall now probably never meet again: I bid you adieu, sir, and, as a minister of the gospel, I urge you, if guilty, to repent,—or if innocent, by a frank and fearless determination, to meet all scrutiny, and clear yourself and another more

helpless being from the ~~great~~ ~~world~~ ~~that~~ ~~has~~ been cast upon you."

George made no reply; and when the closed door excluded his visitor, he returned to the drawing-room and called loudly for Kate.

She came into the room with little George in her arms; but, with a gesticulation of impatience, he desired him to be taken away, exclaiming, "Not now! For God's sake don't let me see that poor boy's face! it is sufficient agony to look on yours."

Kate, scarcely able to support herself, sat down, not knowing what to expect; and as soon as the child was removed and the door closed, Hanson in a confused hasty manner said,

"We must leave Tenby early to-morrow, Kate."

"Leave Tenby! and so suddenly!"

"Yes—and for ever. Fortunately the Bristol packet sails early to-morrow morning; everything must be prepared for our departure to-morrow: and pray observe, that both our servants must be discharged."

"Oh, George! you will not part with little

Georgy's maid: it will be such a grief to him, and she is so attentive and so useful! Besides, on the voyage—if we must indeed go, what shall I do without her? you know I suffer so much when at sea, that I shall be utterly incapable of taking care of the child.”

“I cannot help it, Kate,” replied Hanson; “she must be parted with: I would not for the world take any one with us who had known us here, and heard of course—no matter,—you *must* part with both the servants.”

“But this is Sunday, George,” said Kate: “you would not wish the luggage to be all packed to-day?”

“What is the use of opposing me in every word that I utter?” replied Hanson with much irritability. “I am surely the best judge of the steps which it is now necessary for me to take; and my decision is, that both of the servants are left behind, and that everything is got ready so that we may get on board the steam-packet at six o'clock to-morrow morning.”

Kate obeyed in silence, and rose to go and

“Forgive me, dearest Kate! you know what I suffer; but it is witnessing your failings that cuts me to the heart, and makes me peevish, irritable, mad! Do not feel my want of confidence; it is to spare you, Kate, that I am mysterious; but I love you—oh God, how I love you!”

Kind words could always melt the passionate heart of poor Kate; she smiled, wiped her tears, kissed him affectionately, and went cheerfully to perform her task.

Children are ever delighted with the bustle of packing and the anticipation of departure. Master Georgy trotted backwards and forwards disarranging everything, carrying off what he wanted, and all the while imagining that he was of the very

locked and corded, and then Georgy insisted on packing up his playthings in a little box of his own. This occupied him entirely for a considerable time; at length every article was deposited to his entire satisfaction, and, in imitation of the full-grown packers, he procured a bit of twine, and secured his box with it as he had seen Betty and Margaret do with his papa's and mamma's trunks.

But towards evening he overheard his mother announcing to the two servants Mr. Hanson's intention of parting with them. Georgy listened for a moment attentively to make sure that he was not mistaken, and then ran roaring to Margaret and buried his little face in her lap.

"Georgy won't let Moggy go," cried the poor fellow; "what would Georgy do without Moggy? If Moggy stays behind, Georgy will stay with her."

"Oh, Master Georgy!" said his excellent maid, wiping her eyes with her apron; "I'm sure you would not leave your mamma that's so fond of you."

sincerity of his lamentation.

“ I know what I ’ll do,” said Georgy, wiping his eyes, and speaking the intervals of sobbing : “ I ’ll go to papa and I ’ll ask him not to let Moggy go for my own Georgy’s sake ; and I know he will do it, for he loves to pet Georgy.”

He was preparing to quit the room when Kate, starting up, ran to him, and, placing her hand on his shoulder, brought him back and placed her knee under his.

“ Georgy,” said she, “ you must not go to your papa.”

“ Not go to my papa ! Why not ? Papa always goes to his dear papa when he wants to get anything he wants.”

“ But, dear Georgy, you must not go to your papa’s room when he is going away.”

go and ask him to grant you a favour which he cannot grant."

"Oh!" cried Georgy, "I cannot bear to give my papa pain."

"Then I know, my brave little man, you will make up your mind to part with Moggy. Your papa has his own reasons for wishing to part with her, and it would be selfish in you to oppose his intentions."

"I can't bear selfish people," said Georgy. "I'm sure, mamma, I'm not selfish. Let Moggy go; I shall miss her very much, but I won't let papa see me cry."

"There's a dear boy!" cried Kate, snatching him to her arms; "and be assured your mother will never let you miss poor Moggy if she can help it."

"I won't cry, mamma, if I can help it," replied Georgy, "and I won't say a word about it; but though you are mamma, and kinder to Georgy than anybody else, still you know Moggy's been very kind to Georgy too,—and Georgy can't forget Moggy, and

The packing was at length concluded. George Hanson, Kate, and George rested for the last time in the home they had enjoyed so many happy days.

At six o'clock the next morning George was safely deposited on board the packet, and they once more paced the shore, leaving their only domestics weeping. They were soon under way. Kate in silence sat near the helm, looking at the shores from which they were rapidly receding. Almost every hour of consequence that she beheld was to her by some associations; friends once been kind occupied almost exclusively, and there were few that did not recollections of social, agreeable meetings.

she covered her face with her handkerchief and turned away from the town.

Poor Georgy sat by her wrapped up in a cloak, looking the very picture of misery; while his father, leaning against one of the paddle-boxes, gazed on the lessening cliffs of Tenby with a sad and anxious countenance.

Fortunately for Kate, "the sea was like a silvery lake;" she felt no inconvenience from the motion of the boat, and was able to attend to Georgy as well as if she had been on dry land. Her little charge soon became accustomed to the noise of the engine and the eternal vibration of the vessel, and marched manfully up and down the deck: once or twice he looked at his papa, anxious to go and embrace him, and coax him, as he had often done in former days, into a game of romps. But in his father's face there was now an expression of stern sadness which awed the little boy, and after a second glance he avoided that part of the deck where his father stood.

George Hanson seldom quitted his solitary resting-place; he never approached Kate, nor did

he appear to take the least notice of his child : as long as the shadowy outline of the town of Tenby was dimly visible, with folded arms he reclined, and gazed upon it. He seemed as if he were reluctantly taking a last fond look of a home in which he had been happy, anticipating in no future dwelling-place a similar enjoyment of domestic bliss.

When he could no longer even in imagination behold the shore, he wrapped himself up in his cloak and lay down on the deck.

When night came on, Kate and her dear boy went down to the comfortable cabin : there the steward procured them some tea, and then, folded in each other's arms, worn out with fatigue, they lay down to rest. Georgy was very sleepy ; but just as he was falling into a slumber, he started and exclaimed, " Oh ! dear mamma, I wonder what poor Moggy is about now ! "

CHAPTER XII.

The sly remark that certain people deem
That certain people are not what they seem,
Adding that certain *other people* know
They are, or were, or will be—so and so.
The confidential whisper of the day,
Still whisper'd in a confidential way ;
Till confidants the whispers wide diffuse,
And all the smiling circle shares the news !

HAD the small but beautifully situated town of Tenby been shaken to its very foundation by the shock of an earthquake, a greater sensation could not have been caused than by the precipitate departure of the Hanson family.

As soon as Mrs. Tidmarsh, who had been for some years most intimate with Kate, had finished her breakfast, she put on her bonnet and pelisse in haste, and proceeded to the lodgings they had so recently occupied.

“ Yes ma’am,” replied Mrs. Letson, with the air of a very deeply-injured and persecuted woman, “ they packed us a day—Sunday, ma’am ! think of that—on board the packet before six this morn-
ing.”

“ Well, I never heard of such a thing, and, may I ask, have you been a sufferer?—your rent ? I dare say it is considerably in arrear : perhaps they will send it. Poor Mrs. Letson ! I really am sorry for you.”

“ Why, ma’am, as to the rent, I have no cause to complain about *that*.”

“ No !”

“ Oh no ; they always paid regular every month, and paid me this morning ; on Saturday, the day the last month’s

Tidmarsh in amazement. "I don't know what you may call *good*; but, for my part, I shall wonder if anybody respectable ever takes the lodgings again after such contamination."

"Oh, don't say so!" said the affrighted Letsom: "I mean to new-paint and new-paper."

"Well, that *may* make a difference," replied Mrs. Tidmarsh. "But, now, did you lose any of your property — any little ornamental things,—hey?"

"Oh dear me, no, ma'am, nothing."

"Very extraordinary!" said Mrs. Tidmarsh with an air of disappointment: "and pray did they leave anything behind them?"

"Nothing, ma'am, but a pair of old shoes belonging to the lady."

"Oh, would you give them to me, dear Mrs. Letsom?" exclaimed Mrs. Tidmarsh. "I should be so glad to keep them as a remembrance of those extraordinary interlopers: and indeed I've a party to-night where they would be viewed with such intense interest!"

Mrs. Letsom readily gave up the worn-out shoes, and Mrs. Tidmarsh carried them off in

body came prepared to talk about of their recent associates; the cards touched on the tables, and tea was in haste, because all were anxious parture of the servants.

“ Oh! Mrs. Tidmarsh!” cried wiggin, “ only think, if it had n that discovery at Mrs. Blightblo those abominable reprobates would here to-night!”

“ It’s quite shocking!” said Miss “ you *did* send them a card, I suppose

“ To be sure,” replied the hostess should I not, as we have been *all* to do for nearly five years?”

“ True,” said Lady Pigwiggin. sweet embroidery that is on your

“ Oh, beautiful !” cried her ladyship, still admiring it.

“ Oh, I remember it now,” said Miss Milldew, looking at it through her glass. “ It’s *her* doing.”

“ *Her* doing, my dear ?” cried Lady Pigwigin : “ who do you mean by *her* ?”

“ Oh, that poor young woman,” replied Miss Milldew, “ Mrs. Hanson.”

“ Mrs. Hanson !” exclaimed Lady Pigwigin, dropping what she had held so admiringly, and affecting to purify her fingers with her scented handkerchief.

“ Mrs. Hanson !” exclaimed several voices.

“ Why—yes—it’s true she *did* work it,” replied Mrs. Tidmarsh in an apologetic tone of voice. “ I really put it on without thinking what I was about.”

“ It’s her best gown,” whispered Miss Milldew to a lady who was sitting by her.

“ By-the-bye, Miss Milldew,” exclaimed Mrs. Tidmarsh, reviving, “ that beautiful Oriental-looking bag on your arm is also a specimen of her work, I believe ?”

I get home."

"Oh, that would really be a pity," said Lady Pigwiggin, who loved embroidery exceedingly: "you had better give it

"My dear Mrs. Blightblossom," said Mrs. Tidmarsh, "those lovely chain-stitch ottoman in your drawing-room, were I believe?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Blightblossom, "she was always at her embroidery; indeed I really think, poor thing, she must have originally been in the embroidery shop as a work-girl in some house in London; for I always thought there was something of her manners and conversation that betrayed such an origin."

"Well, that was just my fate," said Mrs. Blightblossom.

"I quite agree with your ladyship," cried Mrs. Tidmarsh.

"And I," chimed in twenty voices.

"I cannot say I agree with you," said Mr. Mildman when their boisterous unanimity was hushed. "I never saw a more lady-like, and apparently amiable person."

"Oh! we all know she was a favourite of yours," exclaimed Miss Milldew.

"She certainly always *was* a favourite of mine; and I may venture to assert that she *seemed* to be a favourite with every one present. The only difference is, that I cannot so suddenly change my opinions, or become the violent foe of a person *to-day* whose warm friend I professed to be yesterday. I deeply regret what has occurred, and with all my heart I wish her well."

"You are always charitable," replied Lady Pigwiggin.

"I trust I am so, madam: a man of my profession without charity is a disgrace to his cloth."

"Well, I must own," cried Mrs. Blight-

we must none of us forget that man was the first person who called wretched individuals, and of course into the same error."

"That's very true," cried Lady

"I mean no reproof, but such ejaculated Mrs. Blightblossom.

"I remember it was Mr. Mildn that influenced *me*," exclaimed marsh.

They were all energetic, and raised the face.

Mr. Mildman looked at them of surprise, and perhaps for a moment dictated a vindication of his conduct score that in his clerical capacity he it his duty to call upon all stran

argument would be thrown away upon the ladies who surrounded him, in their present excited state, he pretended not to have heard the accusation, and turned aside to converse with a rational gentleman on other topics.

“Well,” exclaimed Mrs. Blightblossom, “I’m sure it’s a lesson to us all! and it proves, what I’ve often heard stated before, murder and such like things always will out.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Oh ! Lethe's stream ! too tempting fable,
I sigh in vain thy sweets to sip ;
I yet might smile, were I but able
In thy dark wave to bathe my lip.
Oblivion, come ! each relic stealing,
That memory shrines from thy chill breath.
Say, where shall guilt forget the feeling
That racks his heart ?—in death ! in death !

Oh ! Lethe's stream ! thy torrent flows not,
To charm the bowl where pleasure dwells ;
Oh ! Lethe's stream ! sad monks repose not
Beside thy brink in convent cells :
Lift sable cowl—or blooming flowers,
Thou 'lt find sad memory lurks beneath.
Say, where shall guilt forget the bowers
Where he was blest ?—in death ! in death !

WE hope our readers have never so far misconstrued our intentions, as to suppose that in drawing the character of George Hanson, it has been our object to represent a man

vicious, and perhaps criminal; but adorned with so many accomplishments and amiable qualities, that we wish him to win sympathy and commiseration.

We believe that none are *all* bad; and certainly those whose vices may be traced to a neglected boyhood, and to the selfish disregard of the feelings of others, which is the inevitable result of early over-indulgence and the absence of salutary restraint, may be expected in after life to evince glimmerings of those good and kind qualities of the heart, which, though obscured and repressed for many years, can never be entirely obliterated. And is it not when the long-forgotten tenderness and the affections of his better nature come back again, soften his heart, and render him comparatively happy, that the unexpected accusation or the dread of detection (those penalties of error), fall on him with aggravated severity?

Thus was it with George Hanson. Whatever his errors and vices may have been, his love for Kate Leslie after his union with her was

the most retired scenes, and in winter with her by their own fireside. Her work, her drawings, her birds, her garden were to him sufficient sources of amusement and occupation; and though at times his reserved manner and gloomy brow betokened secret sorrow or some pang of remorse, he was generally calmly cheerful.

In the midst of this enjoyment of peace and happiness and seeming security, a mysterious alarm which occasioned the friends and associates in Tenby to withdraw from him, even the courtesy of a recognition, compelled him to abandon a home endeared to him by years of tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

And thus precarious and uncertain must ever be the repose of a bad man:

from him her affections. Such a mystery must poison every hour of his existence ; and he must dread in every stranger a witness, an accuser, or an avenger.

George Hanson having been once so painfully roused from his dream of security, could never again relapse into a similar delusion. The power of enjoyment was blighted, and loving Kate as he did, the knowledge that his perpetual anxiety and gloom must be shared by her added considerably to the anguish that oppressed him as he lay on the deck of the packet which bore them from Tenby.

Kate could no longer deceive herself with the expectation of happy days to come. To the cause of the alarm which George Hanson had found it impossible to conceal from her she had no clue, nor could she even guess the origin of the stranger's penetrating glance of scorn at their last Tenby party. She was now perfectly aware that George anxiously concealed from her some dreadful secret. Instead of demanding from him an explanation, she was in daily dread of its exposure : gladly

would she have gone to her grave without having penetrated the mystery, for she could not bear to think of any disclosure which could diminish her fond love for her husband ; but she felt perfectly convinced that the mystery would be explained at some moment when he least expected discovery, and she therefore lived in perpetual dread.

It is a hard fate for innocence to share the terrors of guilt ; but when the criminal, in the recklessness of selfish indulgence, tempts a pure being to share his desperate and troubled fortunes, the ruin of her happiness must be the inevitable result.

Kate lay with little Georgy in the cabin of the packet, and was roused by a sailor, who came to inform the passengers that they were safely arrived at Bristol.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two summer leaves on the stream we throw,
And watch them stem the current ;
One floats where tranquil waters flow,
One struggles with the torrent.

WE have been absent too long from Mapleton and its blameless inmates ; but we will now transport the reader thither for a brief period. The place is unchanged ; but not so its inhabitants,—the lapse of more than five years was visibly to be traced in their forms and features. The good rector was somewhat more robust, more florid, and less active. Jane, at thirty-three, the mother of five fine children, and, as the gossips charmingly express it, “another coming,” was no longer the light figure that used to trip over the lawn. She was more matronly in appearance, and looked as happy as a good husband, a fine

was bald, his temples prematurely gone, his hair was grown absent, serious, and averting even the quietest society: he destroyed the plans of his once eagerly projected cottage, and still occupied his small apartment at the Rectory.

Mrs. Podd, whom we once supposed green, began to show symptoms of decay; her health soon after Kate's departure, now looked much older than when we last saw her. But she was still a wonder to the parish, and a hint that a letter from Kate to the Rectory would at any time come forth, and she would go along the old known road with very little abatement of her former days. But on one

During the period of her happiness at Tenby, Kate's letters were frequent, and she easily avoided the disclosure of anything that was likely to render her friends uneasy. But since their departure from Tenby she had not had the heart to address them ; and as George Hanson, for the very best of all reasons, did not leave any address at the post-office, a letter which Jane had recently addressed to her sister was, after the customary delay, returned to her from the general post-office, with the intimation that no such person now lived at Tenby, and that her present residence was not known.

This of course alarmed them all exceedingly, and it was many weeks before their anxiety was in some measure relieved by a brief and obscure letter from George Hanson, in which he stated that he addressed them because Kate was at the moment too much occupied to write. He said their departure from Tenby had been so sudden that they had not had time to communicate their intentions to their friends at Mapleton, and added, that as they

between them. A banking-house was mentioned where Kate's quarterly allowance was to be paid, and to which her money was regularly forwarded. There was no objection given, and the letter bore the mark: they therefore concluded by this time embarked from the ship, and about to do so immediately. .

Jane and Mrs. Podd wept. Mr. Ibbotson, without uttering a word, rushed from the house.

"Oh dear me!" cried Mrs. Podd, wiping away her tears, though they continued to flow; "why did I let her marry that wild young man? I should have married her to that good, kind, steady Mr. Ibbotson."

it; I shall go home by-and-by and break my old heart. I know she's not happy now."

"How do you know it?" inquired Jane anxiously.

"Why, look at this letter: here Mr. Hanson for the very first time writes to you himself, and makes an apology for her not writing, because she's so much occupied! as if she would not find time to write to her sister, if it wasn't for some trouble, some mystery, something dreadful that she does not dare to tell, and which she knows would pop out if she ventured to put pen to paper! Kate never could dissemble, and I'm sure she could not pretend to be happy even in a letter when her heart was sad; and that's the reason her husband wrote this disagreeable one to you."

"I'm afraid you are right," said Jane.

"Right! depend upon it I am;" and with a fresh burst of tears she added, "Oh, why didn't she marry Mr. Ibbotson!"

Jane anxiously proposed an immediate visit to Bristol, that she might take leave of her sister before her departure, or perhaps even

objection; but having read George's letter, he said he thought it improbable they were still at Bristol. He therefore proposed that a letter should be immediately written to him in reply, announcing the intended excursion, and that it should be addressed to him at the post-office Bristol. Mr. Podd, who was quite aware of the expense of a journey and the inconvenience of leaving young children, readily acquiesced in the proposed plan.

Mrs. Podd was kindly told that when the journey took place she should accompany them, and she seemed to be rendered more cheerful by the intelligence. 184

CHAPTER XV.

Oh ! Virtue knows no *hopeless* grief,
 'Tis Sin that must despair ;
The true believer finds relief
 In solitary prayer :
And Faith will take her holy flight
 To realms beyond the tomb ;—
They will not madly mourn the blight,
 Who knew how frail the bloom.,

Then say not to a hopeless lot
 We're fetter'd from our birth :
It *would* be hopeless, had we not
 A hope beyond the earth.
The infidel may well despond
 When sorrow's tear he sheds ;
His bosom knows no hope beyond
 The dust on which he treads !

In a small retired cottage situated on the beautiful downs near Clifton, we find George Hanson and Kate six months after their departure from Tenby, known only to the few

did she entreat for an explanation of the mystery in which they seemed to be so unaccountably involved; but her solicitation was refused. At first, her husband refused her with passionate assurances that the information he held could only give her pain; but she persisted in her entreaties, and aware that no pain he could inflict by a secret disclosure could exceed the misery she felt at the hateful degradation of carrying on systematic deception, he answered her with indignantly desired her no longer to intrude into his secrets.

From that moment Kate yielded to her husband, and feeling that it would be impossible to conceal

sequently supposed that she was still on the Continent.

Little Georgy, a fine, active, intelligent boy, was now Kate's only comfort and consolation. It is not uncommon for schoolmasters, who superintend the education of very little boys, to teach their young daughters grammar at the same time with their infantine pupils who are beginning to learn Latin. We have already said that Mr. Leslie thus instructed Kate, and that she made great progress in the language: she had now an inestimable recompence for her assiduity, being fortunately enabled to assist Georgy in his early studies, and to become not only his principal playfellow, but also his first tutor.

With herself and George, the days of affectionate, confiding intercourse seemed flown for ever. She still most dearly loved him, and there were moments when his attachment was evinced with all the anxious devotion of old times: but when, in the presence of a servant, he addressed her as "Mrs. Wilmot," the blood would rush into her face, and she would turn

to ramble for hours on the downs
boy, frequently sitting down in some
spot and reading, while he ran about
flowers or chase butterflies.

These innocent excursions soon excited
son's disapprobation: he said that it was
too pretty and attractive to ramble
protector, and that if she persisted in
panying Georgy, he must desire that she
sumed a more quiet and indeed mat-
tune. Kate's dress, always of the
description, had of late, for economy
been even more homely; therefore the
tion did appear to her most unne-
unreasonable. She, however, ex-
readiness to comply with his wishes.

though he started when she entered the room ; and Kate, concluding that her costume was now satisfactory, again went forth with her pet Georgy, who ran about with even more than his usual spirits, rejoiced at obtaining his freedom after a confinement of some days.

Hanson seldom left the house until the evening. But whatever might be the cause of his evident dread of being seen, he might with small risk have faced the inhabitants of Clifton at any hour : he had suffered his moustaches to grow, and his face was become so thin, haggard, and care-worn, that few who knew him in his happier days would have recognised him.

Kate often watched him with anxious solicitude : a change so rapid and so fearful was to her incomprehensible. Alas ! she knew not how mental anxiety will mar the brightness of the most cheerful countenance : and yet poor Kate, looking in her own glass, could not but be sensible of a sad change in her own still lovely face.

George seemed to have no actual malady to

Clifton, he had used solittle exercise, was not surprising his appearance had s He also sat up the greater part of the not employed in reading or writing, but backwards and forwards in his own room.

Perhaps a more trying situation than can scarcely be imagined. But she had early taught to look for consolation alone it is to be found; and it was one of her most anxious daily duties to impress on the mind of her boy a deep sense of religion. The earlier and happier days of the course, George Hanson had joined in domestic prayers of Mr. Lealie's family, and she listened with pleasure when s

there, in the heart of a virtuous girl, be a more natural anxiety than the desire that her future husband should kneel with herself in the same church, and pray for a reunion in a better world?

But, alas! of late he had utterly abandoned public worship, and the prayer that he was accustomed every night and morning to repeat to her had long been omitted. At Tenby, one of the greatest gratifications of her happy hours had been his apparent readiness to accompany her to church, and immediately before her confinement, the considerate and earnest way in which he read to her those passages of Scripture which a sick person is most anxious to hear. But after the meeting with the mysterious stranger, his manners and habits experienced an entire change; and Kate after once or twice venturing to express a wish that he would accompany her in her devotions, and meeting with a stern denial, most reluctantly abandoned the attempt. At times he seemed annoyed and irritated when he saw her prepared to go to church with her child; but in this solitary

was none; but we are pointing out
beacon-light to which, in the trouble
that surrounded her, she looked for
And with this solitary consolation,
not be said to be utterly miserable
contrary, there were many hours
dawning intellect of her boy roused
and indefatigable exertions; and when
ing the proofs that her efforts had in
vain,—when she saw the developement
talents, the excellence of his principles,
amiability of his temper, and his
promote the gratification of others without
taint of selfishness,—she clasped his
breast with transport, and if she shed
they were tears of joy.

Still, her love for George Hanson

threatened him; she knew that he was miserable; and her anxiety for his safety, perhaps, added strength to her attachment. At times, too, she would indulge a hope that the time would arrive when this hateful mystery would be at an end, and when, forgetting the sorrows of the past, she should again be folded to his arms with fond repentant affection. Earnest were her endeavours to make Georgy love his father: she would often in the evening make him read to her, or exercise some new talent of which she was herself so proud. But the poor boy was generally morosely checked, or Hanson abruptly left the room complaining that the noise worried him, and seldom returned again that night.

CHAPTER XVI

Oh! thus it is with daring spirits,
 Too proud of human strength,
 The sorrows of a wintry world
 Must conquer them at length.
 But though the meeker spirit bends
 Bow'd down by earthly care,
 It rises arm'd with heavenly strength,
 And never can despair.

We must again pass over five years of the unvarying life which our hero and heroine, with their only child passed at Clifton; and again years had now elapsed since their departure from Tenby, Kate began to forget her most anxious fears, and enjoyed the society of her boy with a feeling of security. George Hanson's eccentricities had increased with every year: in dress and appearance he was so completely changed, that few persons who had

known him ten years before would now have recognised his gaunt form, and his countenance pale and thin, and almost covered with whiskers and moustaches; his fine hair was become thin and grey, and at forty-one he would have been taken for a man considerably above fifty.

Kate, who was but one year younger, had, in obedience to his wishes, adopted a style of dress so antiquated, that she appeared to those who were not near enough to remark her meek lovely eyes and still glossy hair, an elderly woman. Her cheek indeed was pale, and her step had lost all the elastic activity of youth. Georgy was now eleven years of age,—frank, affectionate, and manly; and though at such an age it might be supposed that a mother could neither manage nor instruct him, so docile and attentive was the pupil, and so industrious the voluntary governess, that his progress equalled, if not exceeded, that of many boys who had enjoyed what would be generally called greater advantages.

As he grew older, and more intelligent, his

father's violence towards him. Indeed these were times when he attempted to open him with serious. When danger threatened George's life, and when, which bore down the haughtiest spirit, and generally reduces the hardest heart, exerted its subduing influence over him. Kate treated him as she would have treated him had he been the most irreproachable of husbands: night and day did she sit beside his bed, holding his feverish forehead, and whispering words of comfort. In his delirium, he uttered strange sentences which she could not comprehend; and when his fever abated, with the most eager anxiety he inquired what he had said in his hours of unconsciousness. She assured him that he had spoken so incoherently, that his words had conveyed no meaning to her; and he then sank back upon his pillow, more composed. Soon afterward he put forth his hand to grasp Kate's, and, after holding it for some minutes, he pressed it affectionately to his lips. Kate, utterly overcome by a mark of tenderness so rarely evinced, burst into tears.

“Don’t cry, Kate,” said George Hanson; “don’t cry: you are worn-out and weary; I am better now; for my sake, go and lie down.”

“I will, George,” replied Kate; “but before I go, would you not wish to kiss poor Georgy?”

And Georgy, who had been peeping at the door, hearing his mother’s words, advanced on tiptoe a few paces into the room.

“Our boy, Kate!” exclaimed Hanson. “No, no! let me rest;—I cannot bear to look upon him!—no, no!”

The poor child shrank back again, and left the room in tears: for, spite of his parent’s coldness and neglect, he still loved him; and even his mother was not aware how often he had listened at the chamber-door during his long illness, and how eagerly he had daily inquired of the physician the state of his patient’s health.

Kate pressed him to her heart in silence; she could not say anything to comfort him, without commenting on the conduct of his father: she therefore placed him in silence by

strength to leave his bed-room, and with the assistance of Kate, he walked down the small apartments. His cough was perpetual; and on his emaciated cheek was a bright crimson spot, which terrified and anxious nurse. His spirits, however, seemed to improve; and when his attendant insisted on the absolute necessity of his going out for half-an-hour in the middle of the day, to Kate's astonishment, he made no opposition, but requested her to bring the clothes which would be required for his projected walk. He even appeared as if he anticipated enjoyment, and

latter are impaired, how passive, inactive, and apathetic become the brightest intellects ! The enterprise that most excited us has lost its attraction, the amusement that made us merry becomes dull and wearisome, and perils which for years we have dreaded, and evaded with our utmost ingenuity or duplicity, are for the time forgotten, or viewed with indifference. The invalid may brood over many imaginary terrors, while the difficulty that has in reality long threatened is at such moments too formidable for a distempered mind. It is seen indistinctly, like an object through a darkly-tinted glass, and the timid sufferer shrinks away from its contemplation, hoping to grapple with it, and overcome it, in an hour of renovated strength.

Thus was it with George Hanson. Secluded for years without confiding to Kate any reason, he now, in a state of bodily languor and mental imbecility, seemed panting to press the soft turf of the downs, and inhale the breezes wafted from the distant Severn.

His kindness to his affectionate nurse abated

The subject seldom caught his attent
sole pleasure was derived from listenin
sound of that sweet voice.

“And, oh! thus to die!” thought
man in a moment of partial and brief
tion; “after all that I have suffered,
I have feared, to see her at my bedside
last, to hear her words of affection, &
I am dead to be mourned by her!—
cannot expect such happiness—that
ever before me!—what is this?—
wanders;” and then he spoke aloud.
fresh air on the downs; I shall never
if you do not take me into the air.”

But the rain still beat against the
and the
at last

CHAPTER XVII.

Not a refuge exists in the world

Where Guilt from God's vengeance can turn ;
From his stronghold the wretch at his bidding is
hurl'd,—

He will "laugh all the heathen to scorn."

It was at that busy time of day when clerks are most in a bustle, and customers most earnest in putting in their claims to be attended to, that a throng two deep pressed round the high counter of a celebrated banking-house in the city of London ; and beyond it stood a gentleman, who remained hopelessly in the background, not from any lack of anxiety to get forward, but because, having always led a country life, he was unused to a metropolitan crowd, and incapable of elbowing his way through it. He saw little bits of paper handed forth by many hands, and then, to his

the grocers use for brown sugar, more deliberation or caution than been just so many brass buttons.

At length Mr. Ibbotson (for fact the country gentleman) began the efforts of those around him; elbowed himself into a front place, attracted the attention of a clerk, passed forward and inquired whether he could give the address of Mr. George Hanson.

"If you will go into that inn, I dare say you will find a person who will give you the information you desire."

Mr. Ibbotson soon found himself in the presence of one of the wealthy

“at least, Mrs. Hanson’s income is regularly paid into our hands, and as regularly it is drawn out and her own receipt given; but, strange to say, we really know nothing about them.”

“Who is the person who brings her receipt?” inquired Ibbotson anxiously.—“I beg your pardon, but you will excuse my apparently idle curiosity when you know that it is I who have regularly transmitted to you the small income you mentioned.”

“Indeed! then I am addressing Mr. Ibbotson?”

“That is my name, sir.”

“Then I shall be delighted if I can in any way aid your search: I have more than once heard from you on the subject?”

“I have addressed a letter to you every year.”

“And I have always regretted that my replies should have been so unsatisfactory. I have several times made a point of seeing the man who comes every quarter for the money, but I could make nothing of him.

"But Kate—Mrs. Han
her receipts, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied the bank-
ly suspect that they are
always, fictitious dates: I
to think that, all the time, it
ceased somewhere in England

"In England!" exclaimed

"Yes; and I will tell
one day close to the man
he was feeling in his pocket
son's draft: he drew forth
having opened, he took from
which he handed to the clerk

paper.' He still held the letter in his hand, and looking down at it, I said abruptly, 'Why, *that* is not a foreign letter!' The man changed colour, and was evidently much perplexed for a reply; but he soon recovered himself, and, thrusting the letter into his pocket, answered, 'That letter—oh no, that's not foreign; that's a letter from my father.' Now I feel perfectly certain that the direction of that letter was in Mr. Hanson's hand-writing; and from the freshness of the paper and ink, it could only have been written a day or two."

"And you did not see the post-mark?"

"No, I did not."

"Oh! why did you let such an opportunity slip?" said poor Ibbotson reproachfully.

"My dear sir, you forget," said the banker kindly. "What right had I to interrogate this man? What plea had I for prying into the secrets of his employers? Of what crime had I to accuse him? If Mr. and Mrs. Hanson chose to conceal their place of residence, should

mean this extraordinary myste
convinced that they are in Engl
thing dreadful must have occu
Mrs. Hanson to withdraw her
from her relations and her early

“ I fear there is indeed a v
mystery—I have reason to fear
be in error, and the vague commu
is all that I can make, will give y

“ Oh, tell me all !” said the tu

“ You are not the only p
to discover Mr. Hanson’s pla
ment. There is another, who
made inquiries of our clerks,
and made profuse promises of rew
their means he was traced . . .

factory information: the only clue that has been obtained is the knowledge of the day on which Mr. Hanson's agent regularly calls for the quarterly payment of his wife's income."

"Good God! what horrible mystery is this!" cried Ibbotson, clasping his hands and looking deadly pale.

"I believe to you, as the devoted friend of Mrs. Hanson, I ought to tell all I know," replied the banker: "but come into my private room, where we shall be undisturbed."

We cannot reveal what passed in the privacy of the banker's sanctum; but after remaining there about a quarter of an hour, Mr. Ibbotson came forth pale and trembling, leaning upon his arm for support: his form seemed bowed down by sudden and premature old age; and when he left the house, he pressed the hand of his kind and considerate new acquaintance, but could not utter even a common-place adieu.

Without aim or any pre-arranged plan, he wandered hurriedly from one coach-office to another, as if reading the names of different towns could assist him in discovering that

and not having obtained the slight aid him in the important investigation now engrossed all his thoughts, he was led to Mapleton.

As soon as the banking-house the ensuing quarter-day, the person been mentioned to Mr. Ibbotson made frequent inquiries respecting Hanson's hiding-place, coupled with visions the most violent and vindictive entered, and occupied a position at the counter, as not to lose one word by the various persons who came with checks for payment.

For hours that held repulsive to

and stared with intense interest at the man who regularly received Kate's income. No interruption was offered while the money was counted out to him, nor while he presented his receipt ; but when he had concluded the business and was preparing to quit the bank, the stranger rapidly followed, touched his sleeve, and whispered earnestly in his ear. George Hanson's agent started, and replied in the same low tone of voice ; he shook his head, and was about to depart, as if rejecting some proposition that had been made to him ; but again the stranger whispered, and held forth a purse through the net-work of which appeared an abundance of golden coin. Was it a bribe to purchase the knowledge of George Hanson's place of concealment ?

The man looked earnestly at the gold, and no longer refused to listen ; and there was an exulting fiend-like smile on the countenance of the stranger, as they left the banking-house together.

CHAPTER XV

I'm sure I strove to please
My little store of sense;
I strove to please, and infamously
Can rarely give offence:
But when my artless efforts
A cold ungentle check,
I did not dare to throw my
In tears upon his neck.

Once more a genial sun
cheered the cottage of George
his anxiety to be permitted to
with Kate was at length gratified
were unusually high, and though
the mere shadow of his former-
companion flattered herself that

hand over his glossy curls, patted his rosy cheek and kissed his lips, and then told him, with an accent of kindness, to run on before, or amuse himself at no great distance while they proceeded slowly onward. Though the air was fresh and reviving, there was no coldness in it; the sun, though sufficiently warm, was not overpowering: it was just the day for an invalid.

Hanson walked along in silence; but the way in which he frequently paused, and looked round on the transcendent beauties of the Clifton rocks, told Kate better than language could have done the enjoyment he experienced.

“ I am a poor fellow, Kate, am I not?” said he, faintly smiling: “ I am tired already, —very tired; I must sit down somewhere.”

“ There is a sheltered nook formed by the rocks,” replied Kate: “ it looks as if it were made on purpose for us, a seat of turf, and we shall have the full benefit of the sunshine, though not a breeze can reach us. Come, George, you must let me assist you: don’t be proud—lean upon me; I am quite strong.”

that corner and look at the v
us, passing down the river
tide."

They were both silent for
hand-in-hand they gazed on
animated scene around them.

At length the eyes of Kate
observed by Hanson, turned
side to side, seeking in every
object which they could not f
were her movements, that they
tention: he turned towards her
pale as marble, with her eyes
tended, and gazing alternately
and beneath them. She was
that he had noticed her, and

“Do not be alarmed, George; there can be no cause for alarm. You are terrified at my paleness;—it is folly: I am nervous to-day.”

“Something has alarmed you,” he replied; “tell me the cause: I shall imagine one worse than the reality if you do not.”

“Indeed, George—indeed I will overcome my agitation. It is not possible—so accustomed to these downs and rocks;—the boy cannot——”

“The boy!” almost shrieked the father, “where is he?”

“I will go and search for him,” replied Kate, utterly incapable of moving from the spot where she stood.

“When did you see him last?” inquired Hanson.

“I saw him run towards the edge of the cliff. But that projecting rock concealed him from my view.”

“He has fallen!” cried George, starting up, and then falling on his knees: “O God, spare him! in mercy spare him, for his poor mother’s sake! I acknowledge my coldness,

him.--he fainted, and lay e

Poor Kate's situation wa
she could not leave him, for,
state, such violent exciten
might be seriously injurious
of the boy almost paralysed
At that moment she heard
on the hill above her, and
winding path, he soon stood

“ Oh, Georgy,” cried hi
know not the pain you have c
at your poor father; his terr
has caused what you see !”

“ For me !” said Georgy,
Hanson and taking his cold h
papa really love me, then ?
fellow kissed the hand he hel

recent alarm on his account, and now wholly engrossed by the situation of the invalid.

“ Oh, yes, mamma, close by ; but how shall I bring it ? ”

“ Take my handkerchief and dip it in the stream, and then place it between your hands : bring back as much water as you can. ”

Away ran Georgy, and soon returned with the moistened handkerchief, with which Kate lightly touched the forehead and temples of Hanson ; she then squeezed the water out upon his hands, and soon had the gratification of beholding symptoms of returning animation. For a few moments he sat up on the grass looking round without appearing to notice any particular object ; but when entire consciousness returned, his eyes rested with an anxious expression on his boy, and snatching him to his bosom, he covered his face with kisses, thanking God for his safety, and sobbing with emotion.

Kate witnessed this scene with intense interest ; she was amply repaid for the terror she had suffered, for her husband's participa-

assist to help me up. There
and shall be able to walk s
dear George, where were yo
... ~~the child~~ ...
the child : " I am very sorry
and I hope when you hear t
not think I did wrong."

" Be sure you tell me th
~~truth~~ ...

" Oh ! George," replied
always tells the truth."

" Do I not, mamma ?"

" Does he ?" said Hanson :
known that he does so havin
you, Kate. Good boy —
truth, and you will be spa
even of darker dye than false)

ing about on the grass there, in sight of the place where you were sitting, just as I had been told—and I did not mean to go away; when I saw the nicest little child—oh, such a very little one!—running along by itself, crying very loud and looking very frightened. I took no notice at first, for it did not see me; but when I saw that the poor little thing was going as fast as it could to the edge of the cliff which you know is so high, I felt all over in a way that I never felt before, and I could not help running after it.”

“ Well, Georgy, go on,” cried Hanson.

“ Well, papa, I was a good way behind, and it got very near the edge before I could get near it; and I think I went nearer a good deal than you and mamma would like, for when I caught hold of its frock and pulled it back, we were very close indeed, and I could see over, down to the very bottom of the cliff—oh, so deep!”

“ You saved its life!” exclaimed Kate.

“ I got away back as fast as I could, and dragged the little thing with me, and then

and called me a fine little fellow, gave me a kiss, and told me to be good to everybody, for she had only got a few minutes to speak to a friend; but I tell my papa and mamma?"

"You are quite right to tell me," said Kate; "you have behaved very well. That nurse was very naughty, but she was doing her duty."

They were now approaching home, and Hanson began to show symptoms of extreme fatigue and exhaustion. He exerted himself to reach his home, and lay down on his sofa, anticipating the following day another sunny ramble with his beloved companions.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the sunny days of life,
As your fond confiding wife,
Ever near you,
Prompt to cheer you,
I will be :
But when tears are on your cheek,
In your sorrow if you 'd seek
The indulgence of a mother,
Come to me.

THE sun shone as brightly upon the romantic scenery of Clifton on the day when George Hanson anticipated his second walk, as it did during his first eventful ramble. He did not appear in the least the worse for his exertions and the alarm of the preceding afternoon : on the contrary, he rose earlier than usual, and to Kate's astonishment, joined her at the breakfast-table, when she was preparing to carry his tea and toast to his bedroom, as had been

him with endearments.

His better nature seemed indeed and Kate looked forward once enjoyment of happy days. As nothing could restrain his delight and loud talking had never under that roof since the persons selves Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot there; and when his father, at his breakfast, lay upon the ground and insisted on a renewal and kind words. This time his repulse; the voice that had appeared now sweet music in the air. The recent alarm about the child aroused all the father in his breast.

his good-natured endurance of sports which were too much for him, soon sent Georgy to play in the very small garden before the house.

“ I am not going to be sent into seclusion to-day, I can tell you, Kate,” said Hanson cheerfully. “ I believe you were right not to allow Georgy to stay too long ; but you are not going to walk off as you used to do when I really was very ill, whispering as you left me, ‘ I shall be in the next room if you want anything ; but you must be kept perfectly quiet.’ I’m so much better now, that I mean to enjoy myself, and to-day we will be happier even than yesterday : we *had* a happy day, had we not, Kate, in spite of our terror about the boy ?”

“ Oh yes,” replied Kate, “ a very happy day ; and I would endure ten times as much, for the sake of seeing you fondle that sweet child as you did.”

George Hanson sighed ; but there was a faint smile on his cheek at the same moment.

“ What time do we go out ?” said he.

very well: it is el
three hours; so here you
prisoner."

"A very willing one,"
ing: "and now what shall
shall I read to you?"

"Oh no; what you
times more than what other

"You are easily pleased

"Your talking has a
which a page of literature
you speak, I look at you,
dear face with all its ch
every topic; now a book,
dull enough as far as exteri

"How very fanciful, an
ing!"

"No. Kate not a fan-

look at her; "I never saw a person so little changed, in spite of—of all you have suffered, Kate;" and he fell back on his cushions, and stretching out his hand, pressed hers fondly.

"If I still look fair in your eyes, George, that is all I can desire."

"In that matronly costume, few would look as you do. What a cap! and your fine figure so concealed!—and it was all my doing! You might pass for my mother, as far as dress is concerned."

"Oh! George—" Kate began, but stopped suddenly.

"What were you going to say?" he replied.

"No—I was wrong—you would not like it."

"Pray tell me."

"Well, I have sometimes thought that I wish I had been,—that I wish I were—your—your mother."

"My mother!" exclaimed George. "My dear Kate!"

"Only because it would have given me a

“my new mother’s is
for both our sakes !”

“ Oh, you must not
Kate : “ my lectures are
of spirits.”

“ Well, Kate, I give
me;—alas! what do I n
—but you would find it
to a safe and happy haven

“ Yes, George ; to guide
pilot must know all the d
nel you navigate : when
ance, you must conceal ac

“ A time may come,
tell you all,” replied H
eyes.

“ For ever a mystery, C

“ A narrow way

hate all duplicity, and worst of all do I hate the assumption of a false name. Give me a reason that may account for such an act, or at least extenuate it, and I will say no more."

George Hanson's eyes were still covered, but he mournfully shook his head.

"You *will* tell me the reason," continued Kate. "I have deserted those who were kindest to me in early youth; but I did so for a husband that I loved, and I can bear for him anything but the loss of respectability. Besides, our dear boy is growing up, and it is for his sake I feel it most: you will not let him be called Wilmot when he becomes a man!—oh! at once, for God's sake, throw aside mystery, and let him bear his father's name."

Still George Hanson spoke not; but his quivering lips betrayed intense emotion, and a tear trickled from beneath the hand that concealed his eyes.

"You will think of this, George, at leisure. I did not mean to have said so much; but it has long been upon my mind, and I will not trespass so again. Come, look at me, and see

not with tears: he drew her
him and kissed her forehead.

“ For once, Kate,” said he,
that dowdy cap: there—I have
what a pity to hide that beautiful
old-fashioned kerchief, too.—Then
look like yourself: lean toward
arrange your locks.”

Kate leant forwards; he put
his fingers through her hair, and
much as possible in the style
used to wear it at Mapleton.

“ Oh, Kate, how little changed
Look at me: what a wreck *I* am

“ You will soon be yourself
such walks as yesterday——”

“ Perhaps we shall never enjoy

stronger ; you know we agreed to have a happy day, and you must not disappoint me."

" I ought not to disappoint you ; you have had sorrow enough."

" When I talk to you of sorrows, George, it will be time for you to pity me : comply with the request I just now made, and I shall have nothing to complain of."

" Well, Kate, I *will* comply—that is, if you do not object to going abroad with me."

" I will do anything rather than bring up that child in the practice of an act of deceit."

" So be it : when I am strong enough, we will go to Italy," said George ; and the idea seemed to give him animation. " Oh, Kate," he added suddenly, " how exactly you looked at that moment as you did one happy morning at Mapleton. You forget it, but how well do I remember every circumstance !—you gave me a beautiful bouquet of flowers ; perhaps you will not believe that I possess them still !"

" You cannot remember that day better than I do : indeed, George, I think I could minutely describe every incident, simple as they

“Yes, and you shall
what days those were?”

“Yes: but we were
saw, happier,—and we
store.—Hark! I suppose

Kate paused, for she
ing to one of the men
of the cottage.

“I am glad he is come
I feel weaker than I did
voice;—listen.”

The loud angry voice
distinctly heard in alterca

“Mr. and Mrs. Wilm
I assure you, and that is

his face and lips colourless, his eyes glassy and distended, and every limb trembling with debility or terror.

Georgy, frightened by the female below, ran into the room, intending to describe the strange person he had seen ; but having glanced towards his father, he crept timidly towards Kate and took hold of her hand.

“ It is Mr. Hanson I seek,” cried the stranger fiercely, “ and Mr. Hanson I will see before I quit this place ;—Mr. George Hanson ;—I know he is here—there is a person near at hand who, if necessary, will come forward and prove it ; and I tell you, young woman, that the man who calls himself Wilmot, is no other than Hanson, the man I seek.”

Cold drops fell from George Hanson’s forehead ; Kate, who knew not what to expect, could not stir to assist him ; his lips moved, but he uttered no word, and the muscles of his face were dreadfully distorted. “ God help us !” she exclaimed, and sank into a chair.

“ Is your master in the house ? Answer

frightened, and made r
and the step of the st
cending the stairs.

Hanson started and w
the door as if resolve
trance: but the futility
seemed to flash upon his
forehead with his clenched
to the spot he had left
folded his arms, and sternal
the door.

It opened, and a being
ment whose appearance
Kate and Georgy cling cl
as if mutually to claim p

hair, which retained its blackness, was braided on her high forehead ; and her dark eyes, in her present angry mood, seemed to flash fire. She must have been a very fine woman, and still retained traces of beauty ; but ill health or violent passions had utterly obliterated the expression which perhaps once gave a charm to her fine features, and without it they became repulsive rather than agreeable.

She closed the door violently after her, and for a few moments stood in silence gazing on the group before her with a horrid unnatural smile of exultation.

“ I am here at last ! ” she cried. “ I have followed you unremittingly for years ; and now, traitor, coward, liar, you are not again likely to escape me.”

Hanson's attitude was unchanged ; his eyes still glared upon her ; blood trickled from his under lip, caused by the unnatural pressure of his teeth ; his hollow cheeks seemed burning with fever ; and so violently did he tremble, that Kate every moment expected he would fall. She tried to rise, but she could not stir

but the stranger interrupt
look of utter scorn said,

"You ! addressed by yo
be it so for once : what he

"Mr. Hanson has bee
fill ; and I can assure you
weak to bear any unusual
have ever seen him before
by his looks that——"

"*If* I have ever seen t
the stranger haughtily : "
man, what you are saying
he looks like one who has
ing, disgraceful, criminal :
hour the detection which
perhaps when he least expe

and threw it aside ; and having also taken off her shawl, she walked past Kate and her child, drew an arm-chair from a recess, and sat down. Hanson had followed her with his eyes, apparently fascinated as the bird is said to be in the presence of the venomous reptile that threatens its destruction.

“ Mr. Hanson,” said the stranger, “ you cannot suppose, after so long an absence, that my visit will be brief ; and I surely need not remind you of a duty which common decency must suggest : you will remember what is due to *me*, if you please, as long as I choose to remain.”

He made no answer ; but he turned for an instant towards Kate, and his looks gave fearful evidence of his internal agony.

“ I cannot even guess,” exclaimed Kate, “ the nature of the business which has brought you here, madam : but let me entreat you to postpone it until Mr. Hanson’s strength is in some degree restored ; for I feel convinced that if this painful interview is prolonged, it will be fatal to him.”

"I wish to prolong no interview with you," said the stranger, looking at her fiercely; "nor can I suppose that my presence here can be agreeable to you. There is but one course for you to pursue; it is easy and indispensable, and the sooner you adopt it the better."

"I am utterly at a loss to guess your meaning, madam. I regret if you think I have been guilty of any rudeness; but in my own home, when I am of opinion that my husband's health—nay, his life is at stake, I——"

"What!" exclaimed the other with a horrid scornful laugh; "*your own home! your own husband too! ha, ha, ha!* You are not aware who I am, or you would know that with *me* deception can avail nothing: *I am Mrs. Hanson!*"

"Mrs. Hanson!" replied Kate, really believing that she was talking to a madwoman.

"Yes, that man's wife: you must now be aware that your presence here is an insult to me."

"I should be sorry to distress or irritate

you, madam," said Kate mildly; "but *I* am Mrs. Hanson, and——"

"This is too much!" exclaimed the stranger, drawing from her bosom a paper and thrusting it before the eyes of Kate: "*read that.*"

Kate did read; and the document proved to be the copy of a certificate of marriage between George Hanson and Caroline Fasani, and the date was rather more than four years prior to her own. She read it twice over, and then the paper fell from her hands upon the carpet: her proud competitor immediately snatched it up and replaced it in the folds of her dress.

Kate rose and fixed her eyes upon the miserable man who stood trembling with mingled shame, anguish, and debility: he returned not her glance, his eyes fell, and Kate addressed him firmly and distinctly; neither weakness nor tremor in her articulation betrayed fear or want of self-possession.

"Mr. Hanson, deny this."

He covered his face with his hands and sank upon the sofa.

Kate looked at him earnestly for one moment: she then took her boy by the hand, and slowly, erectly, without betraying any emotion, walked from the room, and the door closed.

CHAPTER XX.

Oh, she was famed for beauty once,
Though pale and haggard now ;
Her hair in raven ringlets curl'd
Around her snowy brow !

FOR one moment after the disappearance of Kate Leslie and his child, George Hanson riveted his eyes on the spot where he had last seen them, and then with a feeble cry fell back insensible on the sofa. The woman who had so successfully asserted her right of ruling in that house, to the exclusion of all others, seemed at a loss what remedy to apply ; but seeing a decanter of water on a table, she sprinkled his face and forehead until the wretched sufferer began to return to a consciousness of his well-merited unhappiness. She then retired to the seat she had at first selected, and, with

once distinguished for person
still in the very prime of life

Slowly did Hanson recover
command of his faculties to ex-
amine distinctly recent events. He
met those of the woman who
his wife, and when, glancing
apartment, he saw neither
he seemed suddenly aware
red, and by an almost pre-
raised himself, and walking
room, took a chair immediate

"You have discovered me,
"how, I ask not, for the means
it suffices that the result is re-
pinous:—nay, I meant not

here?" replied Mrs. Hanson—for such we must now call her—with a scornful laugh.

"Yes, madam; and it is but characteristic in *you* to laugh at purity and innocence."

"Beware how you increase my anger!" she replied, colouring to her very temples.

"Altercation can now avail nothing," replied Hanson: "I know *you*,—we know each other. Had I, when I first became acquainted with your inconstancy and depravity, adopted a wise and a legal remedy, you would not have been here to brave me this day. But I acted like a fool,—a madman. Disgusted with your conduct, I left you, and found amusement and temporary forgetfulness in reckless dissipation; and among associates who were a disgrace to me. This enabled your unprincipled friends to blame *me* for desertion,—to accuse my treatment of you as the origin of any trivial levity which you had committed! Serious error in *your* conduct was still denied; and I had been too unguarded in my own to be able to stand forward as your accuser, even had I been able to *prove you* the guilty being *that I knew you*."

dazzling accomplishment
and you had had the
to conceal that your age
least ten years, I saw you
and was proud of you:
humiliation when I learn
conduct which you evinc
marriage was but a count
had been somewhat more o
earlier part of your career.

Mrs. Hanson deigned no
miserable husband continue

"Imagine not that I k
did."

"You are candid at last !

"I am not at all."

was the pure and artless affection of my very infancy. The object of this love was the gentle being you have just seen."

"And you have proved this wonderful love by rendering her a miserable outcast from society?"

"I have at least, madam, the option of residing where and with whom I please: you cannot now force me to inhabit the same house with a being I abhor. You have torn from my poor Kate's eyes the veil which concealed the fatal truth; but should her love for me induce her to brave the disadvantages of such a lot, you cannot separate us; for I will not believe that even you are capable of subjecting a dying man to the legal punishment to which my crime has rendered me liable."

He rose, and with an unusual appearance of strength, which was merely the result of temporary feverish excitement, he walked across the room and rang the bell.

"Your determination, Mr. Hanson," said his wife, "harmonises well with the virtuous indignation you have expressed at the conduct

— she then opened it
wiping her eyes with her

"Where is your mistr

"Mistress indeed—but
exclaimed Mrs. Hanson.

"Oh, sir," said the se
attached to Kate, "don't
went to her room and pu
herself and Master Georgy
me follow her with them
stand."

"And where is she gone

"I heard her inquire of
please, sir, where the first I
from."

"Well, go on," exclaim

that sweet child are on the road to London !” and the maid gave vent to fresh tears and left the room.

“Gone !” said Hanson. “It is then all over ! What could I have expected from her but high principles and purity of conduct ! God bless her !—God for ever bless and preserve her !”

George sat down in silence, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He spoke not of his boy ; but he was not forgotten.

Indignant at this display of feeling, the angry wife walked up and down the room, and even ventured to hum an old opera air, which so far roused the spirit of Hanson as to enable him to subdue the violence of his emotion.

“You and your early associates are now reaping the reward of your early deeds,” she said, again resuming her seat. “Mr. Fancourt, who seemed to be your favourite companion when first we met, contrived to arrange a splendid alliance with the heiress of one of the richest commoners in England ; but, fortunately for the lady, before the wedding-day arrived, a discovery was made which ended the negoti-

poor thing ! calling her
court. To do this in 8
for she is now by law
and he cannot marry a
George Hanson sat
his knee, and with hi
wards the thin hair w
had grown long and s
that his unfeeling com
panied with a sarcas
At length he started up
bled as he stood before h
“ For years have I dr
“ it is now your turn ; a
me or hear of me, you sh
Ill as he was, and und
most trifling kind. that

CHAPTER XXI.

Ah ! yes, you weep, remembering
How gay I used to be :—
Weep not, for nothing now can bring
A sadder change to me.

A NIGHT journey at all times to the timid and the unprotected is a serious undertaking : but suffering, as Kate Leslie did, under one of the severest trials of life—the discovery of the utter unworthiness of the man to whom twelve years before she had given the best affections of her young and innocent heart, the exertion was indeed painful. She placed her dear, her *nameless* boy by her side, and she wept the long night through.

She could not make up her mind to go to Mapleton without having first apprised her friends of the dreadful change which she had

to communicate; she therefore wrote a letter to her brother-in-law, detailing all the circumstances, and informing him that she should arrive on the evening of the day on which he would receive her letter. For one dreary day she remained in London, at the hotel where the coach stopped; and poor Georgy, amused, as all children are, at novelty, placed himself at the window, and uttered exclamations of delight as sights and sounds unknown to him passed the house. Poor Kate lay upon the sofa, unable to attend to his oft-repeated summons: her thoughts were with him who had vowed to love and cherish her, and her tears flowed for one who had been the cause of her misery and degradation. The boy, who would in all probability live long after she was at rest in her grave to endure the unmerited stigma of his peculiar situation, went on with his prattle and his laugh, utterly engrossed by the present, forgetful of the past, and careless about the future.

After a sleepless night, Kate entered the Danesford coach, to pass without a protector

over the road she had once travelled with George Hanson. Sad indeed were her thoughts during the tedious journey, and it was in vain that she strove to conceal her tears from Georgy.

The season was different, and congenial with the change in the season was the change in her feelings. On the day of her marriage it was but a spring storm that had cast a gloom on the morning; summer was before them, with its sunshine, and fruits, and flowers. But the last few days they had spent at Clifton had been the bright ones that are often forerunners of summer's final departure: the weather was now thoroughly autumnal; and every falling leaf and every fading flower spoke of the near approach of cold, and withering, and death-like winter. At the inn at Danesford a little carriage awaited her, in which were her sister and Mrs. Podd. We cannot paint their almost speechless meeting, nor will we attempt it; but poor Kate Leslie in another hour was fondled and cherished beneath the roof under which she was born.

first like a culprit, for he blamed
cause of her most unfortunate
by the act of promoting it, had b
prospects in life !

Inquiries were duly instituted,
truth of the statement made by
had seen at Clifton ; and after m
difficulty it was discovered that
as she described did take place
the year she mentioned.

The truth of the statement co
be doubted even by her friends, w
hope against conviction. Kate
murmur yielded to her fate ; an
expressed an earnest desire that
be the arrangement, the cottage
greatly substituted and which he

hut which she had inhabited during Kate's long absence.

Her animated manner and quick step were gone never to return ; but her heart was as warm as ever, and her affection for Kate as unbounded. A crimson flush would overspread her wrinkled cheek, and a tear would trickle from her eye, when she heard her called " MRS. LESLIE,"—which was now, by her own desire, her invariable appellation.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh, smile not upon me—a frown were less cold
Than a smile so unlike those you gave me of old :
Thy love was my treasure—I mourn its decay—
Sighing, sighing, day after day !

At times you speak kindly, and strive to conceal,
By the warmth of your words, all the languor you feel ;
But I see that in thought you are roving away—
Sighing, sighing, day after day !

We must now reluctantly return to the brief and mournful history of poor Mary Middleton, who having once ascertained the dishonourable intentions of her companion, uttered no complaints, no entreaties : she knew that both would be unavailing, and with a broken heart she yielded to her fate. A year had elapsed since their flight from Danesford, when George Hanson's remittances became irregular ; his extravagance had been most reckless ; and having ex-

hausted for the time every source from which he could anticipate a supply, he found himself with Mary in the town of Perth actually with but a few shillings in his pocket. They had travelled together as Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, and at the small inn where in the emergency he had thought it prudent to stop, they were supposed to be man and wife.

“What in the world are we to do?” said George: “I really do not know to whom to apply now.”

“I wish I could advise you,” replied Mary. “I know of but one way: is there a theatre in the town?”

“You are right, Mary, you are right;—Romeo and Juliet, and all for bread and butter! and rare fun too! I really think you and I shall astonish the natives.”

He rang the bell, and having ascertained that there was a theatre, and that it was open, he wrote a note to the manager, offering the services of himself and wife for a few weeks. The manager would enter into no engagement until after the first night, on which occasion

the very pretty woman staying
ney's was to be the heroine of
house was tolerably full. The
but was most unequivocal;
weeks the play-bills of Perth had
Mr. and Mrs. Hanson, who enjoyed
great success the principal charm
and comedy.

To Mary Middleton this was
trial. She loved George Hanson's
not act Juliet with him without
present feelings with those she had
at her happy Danesford benefit.
of his which breathed the pure
honourable attachment brought
eyes; and at every allusion to
often

the holy friar ; at Perth it was a stranger, as unlike her parent as possible : but the voice of that parent rang in her ears, and his eye seemed ever upon her. The occupation which a regular theatrical engagement necessarily occasioned was most welcome to her ; and perhaps during the period of her degradation she was never so little dispirited as when studying difficult characters at the inn, or rehearsing them on the stage. The evening exhibition had no charm for her ; but she was spared any actual humiliation, being announced in the play-bills and known in the town only as Mrs. Hanson.

George Hanson's only gratification was derived from the excitement of the performances at night. To him the study of the new parts soon became an irksome drudgery ; and the rehearsals, involving him, as they necessarily did, in an association with the regular actors of the theatre, were to his fastidious taste, now that he had no selfish and sinister motive for frequenting the green-room, uninteresting and degrading. The emolument that they received was also far from satisfactory to a person of his

at its commencement. The m
ious to renew their engagem
this time Hanson's agent was
a considerable remittance. H
ever to the sock and buskin, a
Hanson left Perth and proce
burgh. It was there that Ma
the misery of her situation.
lodging, but at the same time
wardrobe to a fashionable hotel
inquired the reason for this
told her frankly, that it was
enter into society ; that, circum
were, she must be aware of th
her accompanying him ; and

mitted. She passed many an evening alone, and ere the expiration of two months, she was frequently left for several successive days without a visit, a note, or even a message of inquiry.

There was, at the time of which we are writing, a singer, of English birth, but Italian parentage, whose personal beauty and wonderful powers of acting and singing excited universal admiration. Her mother had long been dead; but her father attended her with a watchful and unwearied tenderness almost maternal; and so great was the caution or the propriety of their conduct, that, though public characters, they had escaped the breath of slander. This seemed to speak volumes in their praise; and the signora, — for such, notwithstanding her English birth, was at this period her title, — was followed by crowds of admirers. She was just the sort of person to attract and to dazzle. She looked young, though the bloom of her youth was passed; but her bloom was Parisian, and imparted a brilliancy to her eyes at thirty-one which they probably never possessed at

her poor father and her hand;
told a different tale, and most
that she would change her na-
dence. Signora Fasani arrived
heralded, of course, as such pe-
are, by exaggerated accounts of
and successes at other places.
had received royal gifts; in M-
curtsey had been half eclipsed by
gold-leaf; at Paris, she had been
ed by a ton weight of the rarest
which she had been pelted; and
cold, phlegmatic, well-conducted
veral dukes had rushed from their
throw themselves at her feet; &
every act of every opera she had
by th

being on the spot, such an admirer of beauty as George Hanson should become one of the most devoted. . He heard her sing at the theatre,—he went to his hotel and raved. He was presented to her the next day, and the fresh youthfulness of his appearance and the gaiety of his manner pleased her. She neglected her other followers, and he at once found himself in the happy position of favourite *to* the favourite.

Mary Middleton pined in her lonely lodging ; and, as is usual in such cases, her attendant soon became communicative, and the poor girl was at length aware that she had lost his affections. Miserable where she was, and desperately careless about the future, she resolved to seek out her father at Danesford, throw herself at his feet, and implore his forgiveness. She knew not that he was in a madhouse !

When George Hanson, after an absence of ten days, called at his lodgings, he was told by his landlady that Mrs. Hanson had left Edinburgh a week since with her maid, and that she had left a note for him. Weary as he had long been of a tie that had become burthensome to

It ran thus :

" DEAR MR. HANSON,

" You no longer love me,—you
desire my presence. I have been
brance, and you will see me
not upbraid you,—I will not
—what I might have been!—
forgive you; may God forgive
forgive yourself?

" Your feelings would be
could you hear of my departure
uncertain of my future fate.
you, then, to know that I am gone

" I cannot forget how fondly
you

“ Farewell ! May you be happy ; and that you may be so, forget your unfortunate

“ MARY.”

George Hanson secluded himself that day : he could not go forth to the crowded apartments of the signora. He sent an apology, pleading illness, and was gratified and flattered at the grief described in her affected reply.

His penitential mood was ever one of brief duration ; and, forgetting the being whose prospects he had blighted and whose happiness he had wrecked, he was soon seen the fondest and most favoured of the popular singer's favourites, and as she moved from place to place to fulfil various engagements he was ever in her train. His London agent during this period was peremptorily ordered to use every effort to raise money ; and he was so far successful, that the signora was completely dazzled by her admirer's supposed wealth.

When such women play their cards,—we will not say *well*, but *cunningly*,—there is scarcely any folly into which they cannot inveigle, not an inexperienced young man only, but *any*

say.

Hanson had no idea of me (eyes) incomparable woman, and the flatteries and follies which went with others. But he had an experienced person, considered who was resolved to continue comparable as she knew he had spurned him, she hated him, never would see him more; she she packed up her stage-dress and rode to her carriage more disturbed violent hysterics. She travelled Liverpool, and sang at the theatre with all her might.

riage took place which has already been communicated to the reader.

It was not long before the bridegroom made the discoveries which fatally convinced him of the folly and misery of his choice; and ere many months had elapsed, he heard that Mary Middleton, having in vain sought for her father at Danesford, followed him to the receptacle for lunatics where she heard he was confined. He never recognised her, but liked to have her near him, calling her his "Cordelia." He gradually pined away; and Mary, the victim of a broken heart, was neither strong enough in mind nor body to endure the sight of his melancholy sufferings. He died in her arms the very day after she had seen in a newspaper the marriage of George Hanson; and within a week from the burial of the poor maniac actor, the father and daughter lay in the same grave.

CHAPTER XX

To throw a gloom o'er day's
Might cheer young feet for
While sorrow sleeps, in truth
The cruelty to wake it.

Kate Larue repined not at
tion ; but often did she weep at
pillow of her sleeping boy, while
the disadvantages which he won
tend with, entering life arduous
family, and not even possessing
mother and child were almost in
parisons : and these she

sorrow the days seem always long. During a part of the day, Georgy, under Mr. Ibbotson's most particular guidance, now sat in the school-room of his uncle. The hours of his absence were the saddest of Kate's life, and she watched for his return with the most anxious disquietude.

We have already stated that even Mrs. Podd did not live in the same cottage with her mistress. A bell had been contrived, which passed from Kate's bed-chamber into the humble abode of her old nurse, so that, in case of sickness or any other emergency, she could be summoned; but even then the old woman would have to emerge from her own door into the night air, and then, passing through the little garden, she could open Kate's with a latch-key.

Such loneliness by many would be deemed unsafe; and they would attribute her anxious watchings for her boy, who only left her to attend a day-school, to a morbid state of nerves, caused by too constant seclusion. But Kate clothed the path to the Rectory with no ima-

ginary terrors, nor did she anticipate that any serious accident would befall him. The evil which the fond mother dreaded she named to no one, but it was for ever in her mind when Georgy was absent: she feared that, young as he was, the other boys, in mischief or thoughtlessness, would in some moment of pique or anger upbraid him with his birth.

But Georgy came back to her daily with the same bright rosy countenance, and kissed her with a joyous laugh, that for the time banished the idea of his having been prematurely made acquainted with his misfortune.

“Oh, mamma, what a nice man Mr. Ibbotson is!” said Georgy one day, having tidily hung up his little cap and put away his books.

“He is indeed, my dear boy,” replied Kate.

“So kind, and so good, and so fond of me! and he’s coming presently to talk to you about me. Look! there he is coming in at the gate now.”

“Then, take your cap, and go and play in the garden,” said Kate; “and tell Mr. Ibbotson, as you pass him, that I shall be delighted to see him.”

Away ran Georgy ; and Mr. Ibbotson entered the cottage for the first time since he had visited *Miss Leslie* there prior to her departure from Mapleton, —an interview which perhaps the reader may remember. He pressed Kate's hand in silence, and sitting down on the old-fashioned window-seat, he remained for some moments without speaking, apparently examining the garden most minutely, but unconscious of the existence of the leafless trees and frosted gravel before him. He saw "in his mind's eye" nought but the sunshine and the flowers of a summer long gone by, and the fond hopes and visions of a bright future, which had rendered that fleeting season the brief period to which he had ever since looked back, saying in his solitude, "Those few months comprised all my share of happiness in this world !"

It was Kate who first broke the silence.

"My dear boy told me to expect a visit from you, Mr. Ibbotson. He has been telling me of your great kindness, and seems to flatter himself that you are very fond of him."

"Fond of him !—how can I be otherwise?"

"You are the last person
to do that," replied Kate. "I
for my poor unfortunate boy
at your time. However, as
as I cannot expect that his
interest himself about him, I
believe, be a comfort, a very great
one, to know that you will visit
me." "I came to speak to you
on —"

He stopped abruptly, colour
flushed.

"Lottie,—call me Mrs. Leath
annoyed at your error. I am
to the contemplation of my own
such a mistake. It is idle, what
I —"

plied Ibbotson, his eyes filling with tears, "for the sake of my godson—of my adopted son,—for it was of that I came to speak."

"Your adopted son?"

"Yes. I have now no relative, and I—I shall never marry—and it is my earnest wish to be permitted to adopt Georgy, to leave him at my death everything I possess, and to ask that he may at that period bear my name."

"God bless you!" said Kate, grasping his hand.

"You do not oppose my wishes?"

"Alas!" replied Kate, "I am too conscious of the mortifications and disappointments which inevitably await my poor boy when he enters life, not to rejoice when I hear that he will at least be placed above the reach of pecuniary difficulties. But there is one point on which I would speak to you for a few moments,—one which often presses most heavily on my heart. When you speak of his mother, (I don't think Georgy will easily forget me,) impress upon his mind that I was innocent; collect every proof, every testimony, I entreat you, to make it evi-

think he might have streng
with fortitude the misfortun
I *know* that he never could
tion cast upon the innocen
You promise me this?"

"I do, dear Kate,—this
service that it is in my poor
replied Ibbotson, who then
leave. Georgy met him in th
eagerly up with a question;
silence kissed his forehead and
the Rectory.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Innocence! none shall harm thee
Let not a threat alarm thee!
But persevere
In thy pure career,
And thy God with strength shall arm thee.

When despairing words are spoken,
And thy spirit is almost broken,
To thy dreary home
The dove shall come,
With her green unfading token.

OF Jane we have latterly said little;—but what is there to be said of an exemplary parson's wife, who, besides the many avocations devolving upon her from the school, the dairy, the laundry, and the store-room, has had, in the course of the preceding twelve years, fifteen children, she having thrice presented her affectionate husband with twins? Measles and other infantine miseries had passed lightly over her

was always in her nurse's
escape from other duties,
given her "memoirs."

Her husband loved the child
and Kate for her sake; but
enjoyed so unvarying and constant
not surprising that they sometimes
dreaded at the wilderness of appalling
misfortune in which poor
involved.

There is an old saying, "When
you get to the worst they must come."
any of us could but be aware that
that can possibly happen to
should know when to venture
black cloud above us, with a
t'

never can pause and take breath, or flatter ourselves that the worst is indeed over ! for repeated misfortunes occasion in the sufferer a restless feeling of insecurity, a dread of being utterly overwhelmed by a recurrence of the storm, which has already swept away so much that was most dear.

To Kate's astonishment, at an early hour one morning, before Mrs. Podd had finished taking away the breakfast things, she saw her sister leaning on her husband's arm approaching the cottage, followed by Mr. Ibbotson, and all evidently deeply engaged in conversation.

Kate turned pale, exclaiming, " Oh ! what *can* have happened now ! "

To which Mrs. Podd judiciously replied, " Why, ma'am, nothing *can* have happened that's disagreeable to any creature we care about, for there's dear Georgy in the garden. "

Kate made no reply ; but she thought of George Hanson, and the fatal forebodings she had often involuntarily felt when gazing on the hectic of his cheeks : for even the most cruel treatment cannot render a pure female

1
which curiosity, was prepared
Kate, who never forgot old
vices, told her to remain, as
might be, it could be nothing
concealed from her. Poor
touched by the kind consid-
pliment, curtsied, and wiped
apron.

"It is news indeed, and
Jane; "but we have given
letters, and have requested
he will do it more clearly than

"To tell me what?"

"You must prepare your-
said Ibbotson.

"I am prepared for the worst."

"The worst, I trust, is over."

communicate. Does it concern the welfare of my boy?"

"It does. Here is a letter for you."

"*His* hand! Surely—it was understood between us all that I should receive no letters from *him*. Do not give it to me. Why put temptation in my way!"

"I authorise you to take it; and first read the address."

Kate trembled violently as she received the letter from Mr. Ibbotson; but she looked at the direction, distinctly written in George Hanson's hand, and she read aloud in a faltering voice this address:

"To Mrs. George Hanson,
Care of the Rev. Mr. Morton,
The Rectory,
Mapleton."

"This is a needless insult!" she exclaimed.

"Had it been so," replied Ibbotson, "you cannot suppose that we would have permitted it ever to reach your eye. Your brother-in-law has also by this day's post received a letter

Kate broke the seal and
It contained these few lines

"MY DEAREST, EVER DEAR

"Having by this day
ment to your brother-in-law on
the legality of my marriage
the legitimacy of our boy, I as
intelligence should first be
a letter from myself; and I ha
if my explanatory statement
factory, this may be immediat
This statement, though it rest
position in society, cannot r
character one particle of the
you already know it to be

elapse ere I can hope to reach Mapleton. That I may live to see that sweet valley once more, to hear you say you forgive me, and then to be allowed a quiet resting-place in the old church-yard, is now the only wish of

“Your affectionate and lawful husband,

“GEORGE HANSON.”

“And this is true?” inquired Kate. “I may trust it?—I may believe that I am his wife?”

“You may,” replied Ibbotson, almost alarmed at the wild earnestness of her eyes.

“Call in my boy,” she cried. “Yet no—*let me* be the first to call him by his name. Open the window—quick—open it wide.—George—George Hanson, come to me, come!”

The happy unconscious boy ran into the room; his weeping mother’s arms were open wide to receive him, he was folded fondly to her bosom, and still she murmured in his ear,

“George Hanson—George Hanson.”

“We have had letters from your father,”

"From my father! Oh
replied Georgy. "I thought
hear of him again; and I did
nobody said anything about
mamma even never mentioned
so I was afraid, and never
when the other boys said, 'Let
father?'"

"They must never call you
Georgy," said Kate: "you must
remember that."

"Hanson!" replied Georgy
zled; "Hanson! I'm sure I
called that name before, a girl
when we were at the pretty place
made a noise, and where I used

Jane, "and you will all be happy together again."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Georgy: "and I like to be called Master Hanson, for it puts me in mind of Moggy;—you remember Moggy, mamma, my nurse at the pretty place where the shells were?—Dear Moggy! how I did love Moggy!—But, hurrah!—papa's coming home, and we've done with those new names, Wilmot and Leslie, and I'm to be Georgy Hanson again!" And away he ran, delighted with the news, though unconscious of its real importance and the influence which it must have on his future career in life.

CHAPTER 2

Yes, I feel that it would e
Hopeless as my soul had
To behold thee hover near
Pointing to a brighter se
Yes, I feel, by thee forgive
These despairing pangs
I may dare look up to hea
And, though guilty, die

MR. HANSON'S explanatory
to Mr. Morton was read to
Mr. Ibbotson to the little p
Kate's cottage, and every pa
deepest interest. But as mar
communicated to them for th

tails. The mystery (and it had been a mystery to Kate) may be dispelled in a very few words.

Mary Middleton on her arrival in Perth had become by the law of Scotland the wife of George Hanson. She not only bore his name in private, but an unusual publicity and durability was given to the fact of her being called Mrs. Hanson, from the theatrical announcements in the play-bills and the weekly papers. They had resided in Perth for several months ; therefore there could be no difficulty in finding witnesses or procuring documents to prove their mode of life. Mr. Hanson on leaving Clifton had proceeded at once to Perth, where he obtained all that he required, and carried away the play-bills and newspapers which had registered his having permitted the unfortunate Mary to bear his name, and to appear in public as his wife.

When, infatuated by the artful Fasani, he married her at Liverpool, Mary was still alive ; yet he was not at all aware that these were circumstances which could at any future time be brought forward to prove the illegality of the

was. He then deserted her
when he had offered her marriage
so with no sinister intent.

Of Hanson's meeting with
during his separation from
called Mrs. Hanson, every
has been already made known
married Kate Leslie, poor M

It was never our intention
extenuate his conduct, to offer
for that which is inexcusable
to excite sympathy and con-
guilty man. If our tale possesses
interest, with Kate alone in
Kate, the innocent, the gentle
the wronged, the wretched, as

Many tears did she shed as

was a sort of legal quibble that made her so ; and that, however bad the woman might be who was now displaced on her account, she had married him with every due formality and ceremony ordained by the church,—that she had implicitly believed the vows which he had voluntarily breathed to her at the altar, and, above all, that the marriage now to be annulled was at all events *a marriage prior to her own*.

“For my boy’s sake,” she said, “it may be, as you say, my duty to avail myself of the decision of the law ;—indeed you tell me that it does not rest with me, for that without any active measures on my part I shall be declared a wife, and my boy legitimate. Be it so : I rejoice on his account, for *SHE*, I am told, has no child. But do not blame me if in my own mind there still exists a scruple ; and forgive me if I tell you that my decision is unalterable,—I shall bear the name of Hanson, but during *HER* life I reside in this cottage—*and alone*.”

“I honour you for your decision,” said Jane.

"When do you think we may inquire?" Kate.

"Not for a week, I should think," Ibbotson; "for he has named North road where Mr. Morton's letters is to meet him. Perhaps a few lines?"

Kate shook her head, and saying voice, "No—what could I do if you like—tell him—that he wait and that I pray God to bless him."

They left the cottage; and Kate was in a state of feverish excitement, waiting hourly to hear some intimation of her husband.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Oh ! much they err who fain would trace
Of happiness the resting-place,—
Who would define which lot by birth
Is preordain'd for bliss on earth.
'Tis not the birthright of the great,
Nor yet of those in humbler state ;
And yet with *either* it may rest :
The GUILTLESS are the truly blest.

Two days had elapsed since that on which the events occurred detailed in the last chapter ; and Kate, notwithstanding Mr. Ibbotson's assurance that a week must pass ere his arrival, listened to every sound, and started up to gaze on the few passengers who trod the unfrequented road to Mapleton.

She heard a footstep approach the cottage, and well did she know its light and bounding trip. She ran to the window to welcome her boy from school ; but she started back in alarm

been in such a fright !”

“ And what has happened to

“ Oh, mamma, that terrible
looked round, as if he expected
elbow.

“ What woman, my dear ?
ened, but tell me.”

“ Why, mamma, that woman
ton, you know,—she that came
and me out, and that poor
frightened at.”

“ Well !” exclaimed Kate, in
son’s alarm, “ and what of her ?

“ Oh ! I saw her in the lane,
after me ; and when I ran away
and I ’m sure she ’ll soon be here

their dread, who, wrapped in a very large loose cloak, was standing close to the only window which gave admission to light, and contemplating them with a stern and penetrating scrutiny. Georgy threw his arms instinctively round his mother, and clinging to her, began to cry : nor was it unnatural that a boy of eleven years old should at such a moment be overcome by terror, or that he should give way to tears ; for the former visitation of this stranger had deprived him of the presence of one parent, and had plunged the other in the deepest grief. Kate was for an instant uncertain how to act ; but quickly disengaging herself from Georgy, who ran away to seek a protector in Mrs. Podd, she went from her little sitting-room to the door of the cottage, which was open, and with much courtesy, though with some trepidation, invited the unfortunate intruder to enter.

She complied in silence, and having thrown aside her cloak, she sat down. She was much changed : grief or violent passion had left deep traces in her countenance ; her cheeks were hollow, her eyes bloodshot, and her form ema-

ciated, as if privation and famine had been recently endured by her. Her dress was torn and neglected, and she appeared weary and exhausted. She sat gazing on Kate with a scowl of undisguised hatred, while the timid object of her scrutiny almost repented of her hospitable invitation.

"You have doubtless already heard of your triumph!" said the guest at last in a hollow voice, rendered tremulous by illness or by suppressed rage.

"I triumph not," replied Kate meekly; "and least of all am I likely to triumph over *you*."

"You cannot deceive *me*. What you now feel, I felt when last we met. I saw before me, as I thought, a degraded being, and I trampled on her. Human nature is ever the same: you now behold *me* degraded, and you in your turn are prepared to spurn *me*."

"How much you wrong me! Indeed I pity you," said Kate, "and have already said to others, that during your lifetime I never shall feel that I am truly his wife."

"Pity!—pity *me*!" replied her guest with a

wild scornful laugh. "I require not your pity : I can revenge my own wrongs."

"Revenge!—Oh no,—you do not mean what you say. His errors have been already expiated in years of shame and suffering, and to you no wrong was premeditated. Then do not talk of revenge."

"She who would wreak her vengeance on George Hanson," said the woman, "must be quick. He can neither live long to revel in the sunshine of *your* smiles,—ha ! ha ! ha !—nor to writhe under the terrors of *my* vengeance.—Your husband,—yes—*yours*—be it so,—he is a dying man !"

"That *I* should hear such words breathed in a voice of exultation is strange!—that *you* should be the person so to breathe them is more strange ! But you do not—you cannot mean what you say ;—you are exhausted by fatigue and excitement. If my husband be in the critical state you describe, surely you cannot think of embittering his last moments even by a word of reproach."

"No," replied the guest with a ghastly

smile,—“that would be poor revenge: conscience would long since have anticipated the worst that I could utter. There is but one way of adding misery to the deathbed of George Hanson.”

“And what is that?” exclaimed Kate, trembling at the undisguised ferocity of her companion.

“His seeing you branded with an imputation of guilt,” replied the woman, stooping forward, and putting her fiend-like face close to Kate’s.

But the spirit of the virtuous wife was aroused, and rising from her chair, she replied calmly and with dignity,

“And that he will never see. But you need refreshment;—what can I offer you?”

“I have not tasted food since I heard the accursed story. No,—I could not eat,—nor can I;—I require nothing.”

Kate’s heart was touched, and she said earnestly,

“You must not give way to despair. You are ill,—let me send for advice; or if your mind requires that consolation which religion

alone can offer, I will summon the rector of Mapleton, my brother-in-law."

Her guest interrupted her with a violent indication of impatience.

"Rest is all I want at present. You will not refuse me a bed to lie down upon?"

"Assuredly not;—you are most welcome."

"Here,—in your own cottage?"

"I have but two sleeping apartments in this cottage; but an old domestic of the family, the one who attends on me, occupies the adjoining one. Her room is a large one, and contains two beds: the best shall be immediately prepared for you, if you will accept accommodation so humble."

"Does your boy sleep there?" said the guest eagerly.

"No; he sleeps in a room in my own," replied Kate.

"I accept your hospitality," replied the woman; and then she rose and paced the room in silence for some time, as if lost in deep thought. Kate in the mean time had summoned Mrs. Podd to the door of the cottage, and had given the necessary directions.

"You will not mention my being here to your friends to-night?" said her companion, stopping suddenly.

"Certainly not, if you object to my doing so."

"Oh yes. I am weak and fatigued to-night, —to-morrow I shall be much calmer; and perhaps you may bring that man you spoke of,—that parson. Yes, he will no doubt see *me* to-morrow, at all events."

"If you will be composed and take some necessary refreshment, you will be much better to-morrow."

"I know the only remedy that would do me good: but you have no chemist at Mapleton, I suppose?"

"No," replied Kate: "but the distance to Danesford is only two miles, and my little boy, with one of his elder companions, will think nothing of going there for what you want."

"Your boy!—excellent! Have you pen, ink, and paper? My hand trembles;—have the goodness to write as I dictate."

Kate sat down with the pen in her hand; and

while her guest slowly and distinctly named four or five drugs, the properties of which she was unacquainted with, she carefully wrote them down.

“Let me read it,” said the woman ; and taking the paper eagerly, she read the prescription. “It is right,—quite right. But these country druggists are very careless : have the goodness to write that you particularly wish it to be carefully attended to. Indeed, I think you had better sign your name ; for of course you must be so well known here, and I have such a dread of taking a wrong medicine !”

Kate did all she was desired ; and little Georgy, with a schoolfellow, who often accompanied him in his rambles, ran off to Danesford, delighted at having been entrusted with a commission.

In vain Kate advised her to endeavour to get some rest and sleep on the sofa before the boy's return ; but she seemed incapable of remaining quiet in any place or in any position for more than a few moments. There was a wild restlessness in her eyes that looked like insanity ;

Nate retired to her own room immediately above that where the extraordinary and somewhat alarming and still she heard her pacing uttering the name of Hanson's expressions, which did not penetrate: and it was fortunate that they were threats, mingled with. She could not regret that she found a man so situated, and so peculiar with herself, a temporary shelter not sorry to reflect that she was under the same roof with her. At the same time she could feel under no other safety, as Mrs. Podd was a most judicious of nurses.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Never, my child, forget to pray,
Whate'er the business of the day.
If happy dreams have bless'd thy sleep,
If startling fears have made thee weep,
With holy thoughts begin the day ;—
Never, my child, forget to pray.

Pray Him by whom the birds are fed
To give to thee thy daily bread :
If wealth His bounty should bestow,
Praise Him from whom all blessings flow ;
If He who gave should take away,
Never, my child, forget to pray.

THE night was dark and tempestuous, and the few twinkling lights of Mapleton were one by one fading away, when Kate saw her guest depart, under the guidance of Mrs. Podd, to occupy the spare bed in that worthy woman's chamber.

“ I trust you will get some sound sleep,” she said.

accustomed to. Mrs. Podd, &
takes that draught."

She watched for one moment
of Mrs. Podd's lantern, and the
door of the adjoining cottage
that they were safely housed for
she went up to her own room
visited her boy, and kissed him
she soon retired to rest. A thick
partitioned her chamber from that of
the guest and Mrs. Podd; but she
and she soon fell into a deep sleep
by the unusual excitement of the

In that adjoining room were
Podd and her very unconscious
She lighted two candles, and he

the table, asking in no very bland accents whether there was anything she could do for her.

“ I shall want something to take after this medicine,—some water.” When it was placed before her, she added, “ What is this medicine?—you probably know ?”

“ I know ! not I,” replied Mrs. Podd. “ I could have stewed you down some senna and made you a good wholesome draught easy enough, if you had asked *me*.”

“ Just what I wished ; but your mistress would send to Danesford for this stuff, and insisted on my taking it !”

“ Then I ’m sure she thinks it will do you good ;” and so saying, Mrs. Podd retired to her own bedside, fell upon her knees, and buried her face in the bed-clothes.

“ Oh, mercy on me !” cried the old woman, startled almost out of her senses, as her tall thin companion, with all her outward garments thrown aside, and her dark straight hair hanging in disorder about her shoulders, bent down over her, and placed her skinny hand upon her shoulder.

living woman !”

“ Let me hear you pray,”
strangely-excited guest: “ I can
I should like to hear you to-
me—pray for me, and I ’ll know
mockery, but to listen !”

She fell upon her knees by
old woman, clasped her hands
mouth, and eyes fixed upon her
ed intently to every word she
Mrs. Podd had concluded, then
the stranger said,

“ You are happy, are you ?
done this every morning and
long life ?”

“ Such has been my custom

“Ay, so they tell me; but it is too late now for me. I heard what you said at the moment—the mere words, but they made no impression: I don’t know now what you were praying for.”

This was said so wildly and flippantly, that Mrs. Podd decided at once that she was mad. Having again offered her services, and again heard them declined, she stepped into her bed and arranged herself comfortably on her pillow; but she so disposed her white curtain, that, unobserved, she could peep forth and watch the movements of her extraordinary companion.

The two candles were extinguished, and the whitewashed walls and sloping roof of the small apartment were now dimly lighted by a night-lamp placed in the chimney. For some time the wild and ghastly female sat, regardless of the cold and her now scanty attire, her arms crossed on her breast, and her large lustreless eyes fixed on vacancy. Mrs. Podd thought she had never beheld so unearthly an object, and her pulse quickened and her heart palpitated

some painful remembrance :
finger her wedding-ring, an
hatred, and a maniac laugh,
the glass which Mrs. Podd
table, and then deliberately
from a small phial the mixture
procured from Davesford.
extended forth her thin arm
tently upwards for an instant
lowed the draught, and, with
mation, threw herself on her back.

The curtains fell around her
her from the inquisitive eye
who, after peering forth in vain,
laid herself quietly down, and
clothes comfortably round her.

an instant she was again sitting erect in bed, and, without making the slightest noise, she peered forth at the couch occupied by her companion. The curtains hung as before round the bed, and after looking and listening until she was both cold and sleepy, without hearing or seeing anything to excite her apprehension, she again lay down, and fell into a half wakeful doze. From this she was thoroughly aroused by a shrill voice exerted almost to a scream, and, opening her eyes, she saw that the stranger had torn aside the curtains of her bed, and was bending over her with a distorted countenance, resembling much more that of a corpse than of a living person. With a convulsive grasp the unwelcome intruder seized and shook her shoulder, almost shouting in her ear,

“Up, I say—up—and denounce the guilty ! I am poisoned, and ere I die let me expose the murderer !”

“Lord a mercy !” exclaimed Mrs. Podd, extricating herself at once from the bedclothes and from the grasp that had terrified her. “A

“ You do look ill indeed ! ” s
after lighting the candles ; “
bad ! I ’ ll not be one moment ;
son can stay with you till I retu

“ Do not, I charge you, say o
to *her* till you have brought tho
down my deposition.”

“ You are right—quite right
Podd, huddling on her clothes,
tive and fearful glances at her
and cadaverous countenance : “
disturb and alarm *her*, poor d
no ;—there—I ’ m ready now—
you ’ re getting worse ! — I ’ ll
minutes.—Preserve us all ! w
next ! ” And away she went,

to dress themselves hastily and accompany her back to the cottage, having previously despatched a man they could trust on a fast pony to Danesford for advice.

When they reached the chamber occupied by the sick woman, they found her rolling on the bed apparently in the agonies of death. They immediately applied such remedies as their very limited knowledge of medicine enabled them to select, and with such success, that she sat up in bed and was conscious that strangers were in the room.

“Oh, you are come!” said she: “one of you is a parson, I dare say, and the other a lawyer?—’tis of the last I have most need. Be prepared to write down what I shall state: I am poisoned, and I accuse the woman who lives here, or in the next cottage, Kate—Kate Leslie, or, if you will have it so, Kate Hanson, of being my murderer: she administered a deadly poison to me last night, and the act was premeditated!”

“She raves,” said Ibbotson in a whisper.

“I hear you: you think me mad, and I

again the poison overpower strength and her faculties, and on the bed, uttering low moans rival of the medical man. He, a respectable general practitioner, was in Danesford, from which he declined to the patients who required him. He had been in the habit of attending the family for many years, and at his house a medicine had been bought which had been the cause of all this disquiet.

"For God's sake come here!" as he entered; "here is a woman who has been poisoned!"

"When you sent for me, I feared the worst had occurred; for if the mixture which was sent for had not

putting it into Ibbotson's hand, he proceeded to examine and endeavoured to relieve his patient. The stomach-pump was applied successfully ; and he then desired her to remain perfectly quiet, for fear inflammation should ensue. But she would not be silent, declaring that she was certain her end was rapidly approaching : she insisted on being allowed to speak, requesting that her words might be noted down.

“ I am the wife of Mr. George Hanson : my marriage was solemnised long before that which he contracted with this Kate. The law, it seems, has declared that she is the lawful wife, for reasons which you all know ; and I came here in kindness, and without suspicion, to give her my assurance that her domestic comfort should not be molested by my complaints or interference. She received me with civility, but was most desirous of concealing my presence from her relations at the Rectory. She eagerly invited me to remain during the night ; and when I complained of illness, she said she had a remedy which she must insist on my taking. She wrote the prescription, sent it by her own

"The paper is here," replied J
ly; "but how are we to account f
on the part of the *acknowledged*
destroy a person who had lost at
noying her? Had *you* invente
stroy *her*, I could imagine a moti
deed would be horrible."

"I will tell you why: she t
morning that during my lifeti
should consider herself truly his."

Ibbotson could not but remem
had expressed herself, if not in th
to the same effect, the day that
letters had arrived.

"Were you at home when th
was delivered?" he inquired of
man.

nature of the mixture she had ordered. My assistant felt some reluctance, as he told me on my return; but when he saw Mrs. Hanson's signature, and a request that it might be prepared with care, he concluded that it must be required for the destruction of vermin, and therefore hesitated no longer."

"Do you doubt that it was her intention to murder me?" cried the sufferer, grasping with her feverish hand that of the doctor.

"Her intention to *murder* you! Whose intention?—Mrs. Hanson's?—Impossible!"

"Why, then, conceal me here for a whole day, and never communicate my arrival to any one at the Rectory?"

"Did she do so?" he inquired, turning to Ibbotson.

"She did not send to us, I admit; but perhaps she was uncertain whether such a guest would be welcome to her sister."

"I thank you for the manly sarcasm," said the accuser.

"I feel it my duty to speak honestly as I think, in justice to an innocent woman."

... in her handwriting,
Ibbotson ; " but I feel confi
at the dictation of another ;
not the nature of the drugs h

" And why should I dicta
tion for my own drinking ?"

" Desperate persons have n
now to sacrifice themselves, if
could throw an imputation of
they hated. What severer p
could you now inflict on Mr.
destruction of his wife's hither
racter ?"

She shrank from the scruti
Mr. Ibbotson, and all present
she did so, and, encouraged by
added,

speechless terror to all that had passed; “I heard the latch of the door below move,—it is Mrs. Hanson!”

“She would not have sought this chamber had she been a guilty woman,” said the rector. “She would have waited till the intelligence was brought to her, and would then have feigned astonishment.”

“She is come to hear my death-groan!” exclaimed the wretched woman with a demoniac expression of exultation, “and I rejoice at it; for when I am in my grave, George Hanson’s *innocent* wife shall hang upon a gallows!”

At this moment Kate quietly opened the door, but started back when she saw the little room thus occupied. She had heard her guest’s violent exclamations as she ascended the stairs, but had supposed they were the ravings of fever.

“What is the matter?” she inquired in breathless alarm.

“Behold my murderer!” shouted the frantic accuser—then fell back exhausted, and the me-

— what murderer does she
seemed to address me !”

“ Sit down, Kate, and be
will have no difficulty in clearing

“ Clearing myself ! — She
then !”

“ She does.”

“ On what grounds ?”

“ You told her, as you often
during her lifetime you never
yourself Hanson’s wife.”

“ I told the truth.”

“ You concealed from us in
she states, the fact of her being

“ At her earnest desire.”

“ You pressed her to occupy

“ On the contrary, she asked

A.

“ True, Kate,—it is all true: but this prescription, composed of the most deadly drugs,—it is written by you,—and a request that it may be carefully prepared bears your signature.”

“ Oh !” exclaimed Kate, at once struck with her danger, “ what a web has she been deliberately and with consummate art weaving around me ! How am I to disprove what she asserts ?—how am I to make the world believe that she dictated what I wrote ?”

“ We must consider, Kate,—we must have the best legal advice.”

“ Legal advice !—Oh ! what will this lead to ?”

“ Only temporary inconvenience, I feel assured.”

“ But if she persists in her accusation,” said Kate, “ I shall be in custody, shall be dragged to a prison—shall be tried !—Oh, God ! to what sufferings am I still doomed ! My husband will come here—will learn that I am accused of murder, and have been taken in disgrace from my home !”

She sat down at the foot of Mrs. Podd’s bed and wept bitterly.

"My dear Mrs. Hanson," said her medical friend, approaching her with kindness and taking her hand, "you and your faithful attendant must do me the favour to retire to your own apartment. I have administered a powerful composing draught to this miserable woman, which already seems to have taken effect. To-morrow I trust she will retract an accusation which I am sure is unjust. Leave us now, and wait with patience for the morning. You," he added, addressing the rector, "had better go and explain to your wife what has occurred; and Mr. Ibbotson perhaps will do me the favour to remain with me."

Mr. Morton, having affectionately kissed his drooping sister and breathed a kind word of encouragement, returned to the Rectory; while, supported by the arm of Mrs. Podd, poor Kate Hanson returned to her humble dwelling, and kneeling by her sleeping boy, prayed to God that he might be spared the dreadful agony of knowing that his mother had perished on a scaffold branded with the crime of murder.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

When my youth survives only in memory's page—
When I falter and sink in the journey of age—
When the health of the body is failing at length,
And, oh ! when the intellect loses its strength,
And the Angel of Death comes to beckon me hence,
Be thou my strong rock and my house of defence.

THE morning sun shone brightly into the little chamber where Ibbotson and his medical friend were watchers, and still the patient slept.

“ After so long a sleep she will probably recover,” said the former in a low voice.

“ I fear not,” replied the other : “ nature appears to have been prematurely exhausted ; she will revive, no doubt, but I do not anticipate a recovery.”

“ It is of the utmost importance that we should get her to retract her accusation,” said

"But how to prove it?"

"Perhaps when consciousness will leave my patient to me."

"I will retire now, if you wish."

"No;—you must bear witness. If you occupy that chair by the window, she will not be aware of your presence: take note of all that I say, and do nothing till I call you."

"You may rely on my discretion," said Ibbotson.

"Go then at once, for she wakes."

Ibbotson cautiously removed to the door, and the doctor attended his anxious patient.

She moved several times com-

“ All gone ! ah, they have taken her to prison !—’tis well ; I shall die happy now.”

“ And so, after all, she is *not* guilty !” said her attendant.

“ Not guilty !” exclaimed the patient in some confusion : “ who—who told you that ?”

“ Are you not aware of what you yourself have said ?—though probably you were half asleep ?”

“ What have I said ? nothing to prove her innocent !”

“ Merely that it was a revengeful plot, and that you rejoiced you were able to proclaim that she was guiltless.”

She sat up in her bed, and looked earnestly into his face as she replied,

“ But *you* — *you* know the infirmity of disease too well to heed the ravings of a light-headed patient. Let me think,—can such incoherent words be taken in evidence ?—no, no, I was a fool to think of it : my accusation, doctor, was made when I was awake, and responsible for my words ; I now abide by it. As to those I uttered under the influence

I should be struck with your s
if your words when sleeping *did*
tradict it——”

“Of course, I could not
at your noticing the discrepancy
strange are our dreams, how
the words we utter in sleep! The
connexion with our waking thou
tions, and often relate to persons
we have not seen since our ch
whose very existence we had t
man of your profession must be
words of a sleeping woman, and on
exhaustion and under the infl
opiate, cannot afterwards be que
cating her opinion when in sound

“ And why should I take it ? ” she replied ;
“ to what end ? that I may prolong my existence ! I who have not one being in the wide world who regards me !—oh no ; had I not been poisoned by that woman, I could not have lived many days : I have not enjoyed repose or food since — since — I forget the day :—I’m weary, dizzy ; let me sleep again.”

She lay back with her eyes closed, but soon started up again, and said,

“ If I sleep, I may utter wild unmeaning words, and you may note them down ; I will not sleep again.”

“ You speak to me,” he replied, “ as if I were an enemy ! my object can only be to preserve your life.”

“ Professionally such may be your object ; but why watch the wanderings of a sleeping patient, in the hope of frustrating the ends of justice ? ”

“ You should consider me a zealous friend ; for I would make at this moment almost any sacrifice to convict the guilty person, and to clear the innocent.” He looked steadfastly at

addressed her.

"It is my duty to make no real situation: the strong and and your subsequent excitement a debilitated constitution, has worse effect than I had at first."

"You think I am dying?"

"I never deceive a patient so."

"And you could not deceive live through the day?"

"That must depend on your advice. If you persist in rejecting and nourishment, you must die your end."

"I must live to see a magic some strong restorative: there prepared, which does not remain."

The doctor (for such he was always called by his country patients, and we have not hesitated to give him a diploma by courtesy) took up the pocket-book and turned over the concluding leaves. He paused at one page; his countenance assumed an expression of exultation, and glancing at Mr. Ibbotson's place of concealment, he made a sign to attract the attention of that already most attentive auditor.

"Have you found what you wanted?" said the invalid faintly.

"I have," was the doctor's reply.

"Copy it, then, and have it prepared: it is very simple, and that old woman I saw here can easily make it."

"I shall not fail to attend to it: but pray tell me—it may assist me in the treatment of your case—are you yourself aware what drugs you took last night, and what are their properties?"

"*I!*—how should *I* know what drugs were in that compound? That woman wrote the prescription and sent for the mixture."

with these questions, which I
but to weary and exhaust me
most screamed after a brief par
Idiot! fool! to forget—give i
rose up in the bed, as if dete
force to snatch it from his hand

“Pardon me, madam; I ha
will do all that my medical ski
save your life or to alleviate;
but another person’s life has
and having discovered a reme
fail to save her, I shall not easi
part with it, except to one wh
good account.”

He handed the book to Ibb
came forward, and read in the o
the ink betraying that it had be
ti

lieve her mind : no doubt her friends from the Rectory are with her."

Ibbotson in silence left the room, but his countenance eloquently expressed his delight.

The doctor turned towards his patient : she was writhing on the bed in a paroxysm of rage and pain.

"Be tranquil, madam, I entreat," he said : "nothing but repose and the most profound quiet can give you a chance of recovery."

"Recovery ! you have already said that I must die ; you have embittered my last moments."

"Oh, say not so. Would you have died uttering a falsehood ?—one, too, that would have caused the ignominious death of an innocent woman ?"

The wretched being, who still rejected every remedy offered to her, lay almost motionless on the bed, and for many minutes she said nothing. At last her lips moved, and she held out her hand towards the doctor.

"I had strength—the strength of fever, and I had the impulse of fiery passion to urge me

already, but none of a dye like
you for the discovery you made.

"Thank a higher power
agent I was," replied her
"Shall I call the clergyman
night?"

"It is useless: I tried ten
hours ago with that old woman
in vain; the words made no
none!"

"You could not pray while
of committing a crime! By a
cent person of murder, you
tent on committing murder!—
that the words of the old woman
neither comfort nor consolation

bility, she drank it off without offering any opposition.

“And may I now summon my friend?”

She made a sign which intimated approval, and in a few moments the rector knelt at her bed-side.

“Let me hear you pray,” she said feebly: “I will try and follow you with my lips and with my heart. But it is a dreadful thing to die cursed by a fellow-creature! That innocent being whom I wished to crush!—oh, she *must* hate and curse me!”

But the prayer of the holy man tranquillised the mind of the sufferer: slowly and distinctly his words were uttered, and in every pause her feeble voice was heard repeating them after him. A rapid fearful change came over her countenance, and she lay for a time as if passing from a trance into eternity: but again she revived—her eyes opened, and they fell upon the gentle, tearful face of Kate, who, kneeling at the other side of the bed, had silently joined in the prayer.

“Forgive me,” said the dying woman in a hollow voice.

A faint smile passed over
features of the sufferer, and it
was a corpse. *

CHAPTER XXIX.

Shun not the village church-yard,—
It is no place of gloom ;
Thou'lt read a wholesome lesson
Upon each lowly tomb.
It may indeed remind thee
How brief this life must be ;
But *that's* no sad memento,—
Oh ! far from sad to me.

Thou wouldst not hurry onward
In manhood as in youth,
Determined still to banish
The dread yet certain truth !
If you will read devoutly
The lesson that you see,
'Tis not a source of sadness,—
Oh ! far from sad to me.

THE events narrated in the two last chapters could not fail to cause a great sensation among the quiet inhabitants of the village of Mapleton. The general impression was, that the

strange woman, as they denominated her, had died in consequence of taking a wrong medicine which she had herself caused to be sent for, having copied it from an old receipt-book, instead of one which she had been accustomed to take when indisposed.

A coroner's inquest was held on the body ; when it was natural that those who had been in immediate attendance on her should not give any evidence likely to lead to a verdict of *Felo-de-se*, beyond answering questions pointedly put to them. It appeared that she had requested Mrs. Hanson to send to Danesford for a medicine ; and though the prescription was in the hand-writing of the latter, the entry in the stranger's pocket-book, evidently inserted long before, proved that it was one with which she was familiar, and might fairly be taken as evidence that it had been dictated. Mrs. Podd bore witness to her untimely summons, and the anxiety with which she had sent her forth for assistance. Nothing had transpired relative to her accusation against Kate, — an accusation which she afterwards so completely retracted :

therefore no questions were asked, and, after a brief deliberation, the verdict was "Accidental death, in consequence of taking a wrong medicine."

To Kate this verdict gave great satisfaction. She knew that her husband must very shortly arrive, and she dreaded, in his debilitated state of health, his hearing of the tragical fate of one he had once admired, perhaps loved,—a fate which it was not unnatural he should trace to his own conduct; and she knew that the appalling and unhallowed obsequies of the suicide would cut him to the soul. All this, however, was spared to her, and she resolved, if possible, to conceal from him the recent visit of her he once called wife, and her melancholy end.

It was arranged that an apartment should be prepared for them at the Rectory; and as his letters had informed him of this plan, he would of course drive there without stopping at the cottage. Kate therefore at once removed to the residence of her brother-in-law, and was most happy to quit the scene of such a catastrophe, and the immediate neighbourhood of

could not easily forget.

On the evening of the death, Kate was sitting alone in the room of the Rectory; when she perceived the approach of a carriage. She felt a great beat, she knew it was her husband, for no one else could truly her husband, for no one else could claim him. She wished to go out to meet him, but she had not strength to do so, she was clinging for support to the wall. When the carriage stopped; there was a little passage; the door opened, and Mr. Hanson entered the room, leaning on the shoulder of his son, who had been sent to receive him.

He leant fondly on the boy's shoulder.

on each cheek was a bright crimson spot. The thinness of his face had given an additional prominence to his finely-shaped nose, and round his mouth the skin seemed tightened; his beautiful teeth unnaturally protruded, and there was that expression, so unerring, so fatal, that tells of certain, though perhaps of lingering, consumption.

Kate read his doom at a glance: she moved not, she spoke not,—she stood staring at him in dismay. He tried to advance towards her; but the unusual exertion, combined with the agitation occasioned by the meeting, overcame him; he sank into a chair near the door, and for some time his cough — “not loud, but deep” — seemed to threaten his immediate dissolution.

But we will not dwell on so painful a meeting: repose and tranquillity of mind produced a favourable change; and Kate, gradually accustomed to the deathlike expression of his features, flattered herself (as all have done who have watched over the couch of some loved being similarly situated) that her fears

had exaggerated the extent of the danger, and that the lustre of the eye and the flush of the cheek betokened health and strength returning. During a bright sunny morning on the second day after his arrival, he walked with Kate for an hour in the garden, talking—as the dying will talk—of happy days to come,—of summer rambles in the dear old path by the rivulet, and winter evenings enlivened by the sports of Georgy !

It was now the early spring time,—that fair season when chilling winds creep to the breast of the invalid, concealed by rays of sunshine : George Hanson's cough came on with unusual violence, and they hastened to the house.

The next morning they sat together at the window of their own room, from whence could be seen the path which led from the village up to the church. They sat hand in hand ; and Kate, who, without any consultation with him on the subject, had commenced her pleasing task the morning after his arrival, had been reading prayers to him, and was now proceeding with the psalms and lessons for

the day. Suddenly the funeral bell of the church began to toll. Kate started and changed colour; she well knew whose funeral was to take place that morning, and she bitterly regretted having allowed him to remain in that apartment.

“Come, George,” she said, rising; “let us go into the sitting-room. I cannot read to you here, for that bell distracts my attention.”

“Stop, dear Kate,” he answered: “I see them now; they are going up the path. A funeral is so rare here in this small parish, that I should like to go up to the church:—you know *mine* will in all probability be the next.”

“You must not go, George,” replied Kate eagerly; “no, no,—you must not.”

“I am sorry to interrupt you when you are reading to me, for indeed it is a great comfort; but you must indulge me to-day:” and he threw his cloak over his shoulders. “I will not have *you* come, Kate, for it will be too much for you: I shall do very well alone.”

He left the room; and for some time Kate

was too much amazed and alarmed at this most unexpected occurrence to follow and assist him. At length she in some degree recovered her self-possession, and hastily snatching up a shawl and bonnet, she ran through the garden towards the church. But George, intent on witnessing and hearing the funeral service, seemed for the moment to have regained his healthful strength. Kate could not overtake him; and when she reached the churchyard, he was standing by the side of the grave with others whose curiosity had induced them to follow the body.

Mr. Morton soon finished the brief but most solemn service; the coffin was lowered into the grave, and the sexton threw down upon it a portion of the soil. Mr. Morton entered the church to take off his surplice, and the few gazers began to disperse. Kate, rejoicing that no discovery had taken place, prepared to lead George Hanson away; but he was inattentive to her at the moment, as he was leaning forward to address the sexton.

"Pray tell me," said he, "whose body has just been consigned to the earth."

"A stranger, sir," replied the man,—“and with a strange name that I don't remember.”

"Come, George, I can wait no longer," cried Kate in an agony of fear and impatience.

"In one moment," he replied; and then again addressing the sexton, he said, "Read me the inscription on the coffin plate."

The old man pushed aside some rubbish with his spade, and stooping down, read "CAROLINE FASANI."

George for an instant stood amazed, stupefied; he then fell backwards apparently lifeless on the turf, and was borne by some of the bystanders to the Rectory, where he lay for a long time in a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XXX.

It is no easy task to tear away
The ivy from the wall that was its stay ;
The struggle is as hard when she is told
'Tis time her circling arms relax their hold
But oh not thus must thou thy fondness prove ;
Thy child—his child still claims a mother's love,—
The younger ivy plant, who closely creeps
And soothes his widow'd mother when she weeps.

THE fate of George Hanson, already inevitable, was materially accelerated by the shock which he had experienced at the funeral of the suicide. Kate still concealed from him the dreadful particulars of her death, but anxiously impressed upon his mind the fact that her last moments had been devoted to prayer. This assurance seemed to give him comfort ; but his bodily malady hourly increased.

Kate watched him with a full consciousness

of the event which was so soon to happen; she often sat gazing on him with an earnestness, the result of her conviction that in a week, a day, an hour, she should seek for those wan features in vain.

“In a brief week,” thought she, “if I turn towards the spot where thou art, I shall behold nothing but the cold earth of the churchyard. Oh! to lose him now! — now that he is subdued and penitent, and that we might have been so happy together!”

Alas! poor mourner! hers had been a life of anxiety and disappointment, and to see the loved one depart when at length her mild influence had estranged him from the errors of the past, and he knelt down with her to pray for pardon with a firm belief that it would not be denied to a sincere penitent, was indeed an overwhelming trial to her affectionate forgiving heart.

But it is not by such a career as George Hanson's that the calm enjoyment of life's autumn can be earned; nor shall the reckless libertine who gratifies every selfish desire at-

was a green old age, walking hand-in-hand the downward path with the fond partner of more joyous hours, or gazing proudly on the maturity of his first-born.

The mind may be purified; but bad passions, and the anxieties and regrets which are ever their result, must prematurely have worn out its mortal tenement of clay; and she who was in youth united to such a man, after suffering all the anguish of witnessing his disgraceful career, even in the hour of his reformation, when brighter, purer days seem coming, is too surely doomed to watch over his deathbed and follow him to the grave.

Kate saw him rally occasionally in a wonderful manner: there were days when his strength seemed to return as if by a miracle, and he would rise, and hold himself erect, and pace his room with feverish energy; even moving and raising articles of furniture, to prove the favourable change which he felt, and to make her exult with him in the prospect of recovery. His appetite at times, too, seemed restored; and delicacies which he fancied were procured.

from the town, and were eaten with apparent appetite and relish. But though he was himself deceived, Kate never was so at this period of his illness : indeed, it was now impossible to look upon his face and not think of death.

Georgy was seldom allowed to be near him, because the close room was unwholesome. But he watched every opportunity, and crept to his dying father's couch whenever he saw the door open and unguarded by Kate's watchful eyes.

One morning she found him hanging over the invalid, trying to amuse him with some boyish story.

"Georgy, my love," she said, "do not stoop over papa ; you keep the air from him."

"Keep the air from him, mamma !" replied the child : "why, that is what *you* are always trying to do !—look at the windows and the doors !"

"Go, my dear boy," murmured Hanson languidly. "I know what your mother means ; and she is quite right — you must not inhale my breath, for there is death in it !"

The door burst into open.

"Oh, George," exclaimed Kate: "your strength will restore your father. You shall come back by-and-by."

George kissed his mother, and ran out of the room.

"You do not think me better, Kate, I see it," said Eliza. "no,—not I to-day. I was strong yesterday, but now—oh, my weakness is not to be told!—how could I so deceive myself?"

"The day is unfavorable, George: you will feel better to-morrow."

"I may rally; but there is no hope, Kate: you know it—yes, I see you do, and I rejoice at it: for notwithstanding all, Kate, you love me still! Dear, dear Kate, how happy we might have been together!"

Kate could not answer him.

"I shall be buried here, in the old church-yard? promise me that."

"Should you die first, George," replied Kate with an effort, "I promise: and on the marble-slab that bears your name, will you not wish

another name to be engraved—a name we have rarely mentioned?”

“Another name!—what name?”

“MARY!” said Kate distinctly, though her tears fell fast: “to the memory of MARY, wife of George Hanson!”

“You are right; it is but just.”

He wept not; the source of tears in him had long seemed dried up. Indeed, those who, like Hanson, linger on in such an extremity of bodily debility, generally evince some diminution of the powers of the mind; and the feelings either seem less acute, or are perhaps already partially transferred from earthly interests to a purer sphere.

He held her hand, and gazed on her intently for some time: at length he said,

“Life is still strong in you, Kate! you are weary now and worn with watching; but days will come when time shall have subdued your sorrow,—and then, Kate, I pray to God that the future may, in some degree, atone for the past!”

“I will struggle to live, for my boy’s sake!

But, George, be sure of this,—Mapleton will be my home, and—and your grave my resting-place !”

“ My boy !” exclaimed Hanson. “ Oh, yes, live ;—for his sake, live !—and guard him from his father’s errors ! Remember that a parent’s weak indulgence was my ruin ; and watch over our dear, dear boy !”

We dwell no longer on this painful scene, — the closing scene of George Hanson’s life. That evening he breathed his last ; and the widow and the orphan boy wept in each other’s arms !

CONCLUSION.

PERHAPS it were wisest here to lay down the pen, for our tale is told. But there are some readers who become interested for the characters whose hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, have perchance wiled away an idle hour, or cheered a gloomy one; and for their sakes, we will venture to take a peep at the only child of our hero ten years after the grave had closed upon the errors and repentance of his father.

We find George William Hanson, (our old acquaintance Georgy,) at the age of two-and-twenty, master of an excellent old mansion, situated in a beautiful though not very extensive park. He possessed every personal advantage which his father could boast at the same age; and the watchful, affectionate care of his only surviving parent had bestowed on him a highly-cultivated mind.

He had never been one of those melancholy slaves of education, who having finished one task, is set down to another, — the pale premature prodigy of some systematic exhibitor of precocious talent. His mother's only system had been regularity of discipline, undeviating kindness, and the total absence of injudicious indulgence.

It will be remembered that his father was, in common with other grandchildren of the Duke of Canterton, to inherit a considerable property. He became entitled to this accession of fortune about a year after his marriage with Kate; but for ten years after that period he lived in utter seclusion, avoiding all communication with any one connected with him, and for the last five years he assumed a feigned name. He was himself aware of the death of his wealthy relation, and the subsequent demise of two uncles, whose shares also became his right; but such was his dread of detection, that he never applied for the income arising from the property, but allowed it to be supposed that it would be claimed as soon as he returned from

abroad. For more than ten years, therefore, the principal accumulated; and Kate, at his death, found that her son would, at the expiration of his minority, be the possessor of a very handsome income. She was thus enabled to give him every advantage which can be obtained from a private tutor and a university education; and we now find him, in his easy-chair at Oakley Park, a wise, a wealthy, and a most amiable young man.

It was a beautiful day in August; the windows of the drawing-room were open, and the fragrance of flowers was wafted from the garden by the evening breeze.

“Six o’clock!” he murmured, examining his watch, and then pacing the room, and looking out of the window impatiently, as the most amiable of men will do when their friends do not arrive in time for dinner. At this moment a travelling carriage appeared at a distance; and at the same moment an elderly gentleman of about sixty years of age entered the room, and was most kindly welcomed by his young host.

without ceremony
his neck, and kissed him

The lady was no longer
distantly past fifty, and
and matronly in the
retained much beauty; a
smile that mildness and
which lends a charm to
most defying the ravages

"I fear I am late, Geo

"You are never here
you to be, dear mother,"

"And no guests, Geo
hope?"

"None but our good fr

Kate's hand was warm
and faithful friend. I am

Mrs. Podd. At a very advanced, but still *uncertain* age, (for never did she reveal to mortal how old she was!) she expired in the arms of her beloved mistress.

The Reverend Mr. Morton was now possessed of a valuable living, which had been in the gift of his nephew, and with his amiable wife, (who at fifty-one was very fat and very good-humoured,) and all his family, was expected early on the wedding-day.

The marriage settlements were signed, the wedding-ring was bought, and the bride's *femme de chambre* had carefully packed all those innumerable articles of finery, without which it is utterly impossible that any bride should start respectably from the paternal roof.

The sun shone propitiously on the wedding morning, the bells rang merrily, and the village lads and lasses strewed the churchyard path with flowers. Kate (*our* Kate) shed tears beneath her veil; but she would not let her dear boy see them. She gave him her blessing, and she saw him go from her with some regret; but it was alleviated by pride and confidence, for

she knew that his principles were good, his faith sincere, and that with him every selfish feeling was secondary to his consideration for others.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
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Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

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KINDNESS IN WOMEN.

VOL. III.

LONDON
PRINTED BY BARNES
Dartmouth Street, E.C.

KINDNESS IN WOMEN.

TALES

BY

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY.

“ Kindness in women, not their beauteous looks,
Shall win my love.”

SHAKSPERE.

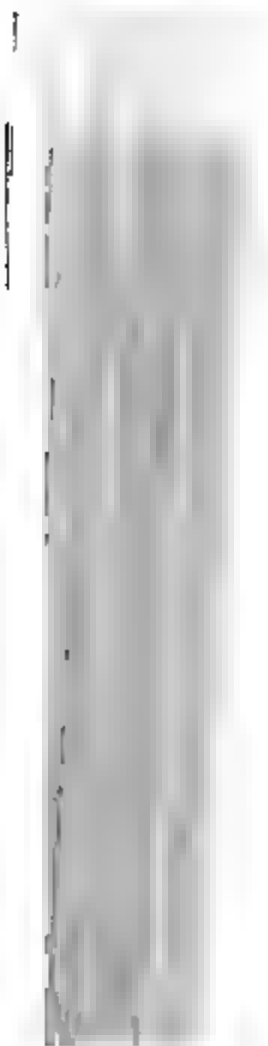
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.



DAVID DUMPS.

CHAPTER I.

DRAMATISTS are apt to suppose the scene of a tragedy must of necessity be placed in a palace or a senate-house, and that the hero, if not actually heir to a crowned head, must be one of the blood-royal, or a noble of the highest rank. This is quite a mistake ; for the “ domestic tragedy ” comes much more home to the feelings, because the adventures and sufferings of the actors are such as it might by chance be our own lot to encounter.

Romance-writers are also fond of the tower and the turret, the terrace and the tapestried chamber ; and the hero walks forth in cloth of gold and a plumed cap, while the heroine sits in her bower, in white satin, with strings of pearls round her alabaster neck.

Novel-writers are worse than all. **High life**

is their only sphere, and we must imagine that we sit in the chambers of the aristocracy, fragrant with all manner of exotics, and shaded with rose-coloured curtains,

“ Whilst we are told how a duchess
Conversed with her cousin the earl !”

We have nothing of the kind to offer to the reader in the following pages. Our hero rises (whilst his spirits sink) from a very low grade of society ; the heroine is one of what is called the middling class ; and the adventures, though deeply tragic, and quite enough to make any mortal hero pine away to a very skeleton, are thoroughly domestic, and not only such as might have happened to any one of us, but such as have actually befallen *somebody*.

We do not say that events of the most unforeseen and thrilling nature will not be found in these pages ; but knowing the prevailing mania of the reading public, we deem it right to state, to prevent disappointment, that in the following true story we shall never once lead the way into the mansion of a nobleman, nor do we even intend to cross the threshold of a member of parliament. By making this candid avowal, we shall considerably diminish the number of our readers ; but there will be at

least a diminution of the average quantity of disappointment among those who with a yawn throw aside the volume.

Anthony Dumps, the father of our hero, married Dora Coffin on St. Swithin's Day in the first year of the last reign.

Anthony was then comfortably off; but, through a combination of adverse circumstances, he went rapidly down in the world, became a bankrupt, and being obliged to vacate his residence in St. Paul's Churchyard, he removed to No. 3, Burying-ground Buildings, Paddington Road, where Mrs. Dumps was delivered of a son, who was christened David.

David sighed away his infancy like other babes and sucklings; and when he grew to be a hobbledehoy, there was a seriousness in his visage, and a much-ado-about-nothingness in his eye, which were proclaimed by goodnatured people to be indications of deep thought and profundity; while others, less "flattering sweet," declared they indicated nought but want of comprehension and the dulness of stupidity. As he grew older, he grew graver: sad was his look, sombre the tone of his voice, and half an hour's conversation with him was a very serious affair indeed.

Burying-ground Buildings, Paddington Road, was the scene of his infant sports. Since his failure, his father had earned his *livelyhood* by letting himself out as a mute or a mourner to a furnisher of funerals. "Mute" and "voluntary woe" were his stock-in-trade.

Often did Mrs. Dumps ink the seams of his smallclothes, and darken his elbows with a blacking-brush, ere he sallied forth to follow borrowed plumes; and when he returned from his public performance, (oft *rehearsed*,) Master David did innocently crumple his crapes and sport with his weepers.

His melancholy outgoings at length were rewarded by some pecuniary incomings. The demise of others secured a living for him; and, after a few unusually propitious sickly seasons, he grimly smiled as he counted his gains,—the mourner exulted, and in praise of his profession the mute became eloquent.

Another event occurred: after burying so many people professionally, he at length buried Mrs. Dumps. *That*, of course, could not be considered as a mere matter of business. We have before remarked that she was descended from the Coffins,—she was now gathered to her ancestors.

It was not surprising that Dumps had risen

in his profession. He was a perfect master of melancholy ceremonies; and as a mute proclaimer of the mutability of human affairs, none could equal him. Never did the summer sunshine of nankeen lie beneath the shadows of his "inky cloak;" never, while his countenance betokened the "winter of discontent," was he known to simper,—even in his sleeve!

Dumps had long been proud of gentility of appearance; a suit of black had been his working-day costume: nothing, therefore, could be more easy than for Dumps to turn gentleman. He did so; took a villa at Gravesend, chose for his own sitting-room a chamber that looked against a dead wall, and, whilst he was lying in state upon the squabs of his sofa, he thought seriously of the education of his son, and resolved that he should be instantly taught the dead languages.

David was superstitious. Though his temper and disposition had neither been spirited nor sprightly, his dreams and his fears had been both. From the windows of Burying-ground Buildings he had daily witnessed grave proceedings; and at the witching hour of night, he felt convinced he had seen unearthly sports,—sports *on* the turf, among beings who ought by rights to have been *under*

frisking in the congenial p
light.

All this made an impr
he was decidedly a lad of
mind.

It has been asserted that
are our happiest. It may
spirited, daring boys, posses
gree of talent, sufficient to c
the routine of discipline wi
and yet without the dang
grace. With such boys th
the cake-shop make ample
hours' fagging. But it is a
delicate constitution and of d
he rises to the drudgery o
and cakes and cricket offer
ment for raps on the knuckle

Bombes as was David's B

got the name of "a dull boy." He did not laugh, and leap, and run about like other boys ; he had a dull habit of walking up and down the field thinking of nothing. Then, too, he never seemed to understand a joke until he became the victim of one ; and so the big boys constantly made fun of him, and the little boys used to delight in making him an apple-pie bed.

David had a thoroughly good disposition, and never resented any of these tricks. School-boys never appreciate each other's good qualities (how should they ?) ; and when he looked grave, after some practical joke that had inconvenienced and annoyed him, they thought he was sulky and revengeful. Not a bit of it : he often looked at them with wonder and envy, wishing that he had within him the capability of so much enjoyment.

At seventeen, David left school, and resided with his father at Cypress Villa, Gravesend. His father was a miserable man ! It is, alas ! the mournful and almost inevitable result of leaving off business and being rich ! Often had Anthony Dumps, in his days of poverty and *mute* drudgery, sighed, as he put by part of his earnings for the time when he should be a gentleman and have nothing to do ; and that

time was now arrived, and he actually did nothing from morning till night : and a very miserable state of existence he found it.

Anthony Dumps would now and then, unknown to anybody, slip on a suit of old mourning, and steal out to follow in the wake of some funeral : it was refreshing to him, it reminded him of old times ; but still it was an unsubstantial stolen enjoyment, it produced no remuneration, and he was an unnoticed unimportant personage.

"Your son is growing up," said a neighbour to Mr. Dumps, one day ; "what do you mean to make him ?"

"Nothing at all," replied he, drawing himself up, and putting his hands in his breeches' pockets.

"Nothing !"

"Certainly not ; I've made plenty of money for an only child, and David shall enjoy himself."

What a sad mistake this was ! That same "nothing at all" is the most fatiguing *profession* a man can enter. We do not by any means mean to say that all men ought to bring up their sons to the same trades in which they themselves plodded and prospered : but we

would have the rich tradesman educate his son for a profession, and snatch him from the *ennui* which is the inevitable bane of him who has no occupation."

Only look at the men of a certain age who *are and have been* all their lives inactive. With plenty of money in their pockets, but without a pursuit, to them the daily gossip is important, and their own rheumatisms are matters of serious cogitation, and talked about to every unfortunate acquaintance whom they can lay hold of by a button.

But David was to be "*nothing at all*;" and, though "*nothing can come of nothing*," his father was disappointed that people did not *make much of him*; and seeing him sit sad and silent for hours together, looking at dull books, without appearing ever to turn over a page, he one day said—

"David, this won't do!"

"What won't do, sir?" replied David, dropping his book.

"Why, you must see more of the world, and the world must see more of you."

"How so, sir?"

"Why, David, you see I'm no gentleman—never was, and never shall be."

"No, sir?"

"Well, then, you *are* a gentleman."

"Am I, sir?"

"'Am I, sir!' Yes, to be sure; haven't you had learning, and fine clothes, and pocket-money? and didn't I bring you up to be *nothing at all*?"

"Yes, sir," said David, sighing.

"You've now left school ten years."

"Ten years!"

"Yes, you are seven-and-twenty; and since you've been at home with me, you've lived the life of a *perfect gentleman*; and that's a great comfort to a father. You've never had to do one single thing but get up of a morning, put on your clothes, eat, drink, and walk about, undress at night, and go to sleep. As to your reading, that was all your own choice; and I don't believe you've done much of that."

"I sometimes think I should be happier, sir, if I had something to do."

"What do you mean?" inquired his father.

"Why, I sometimes wish you had brought me up to something."

"It is not genteel, David."

"Isn't it, father? Well, I don't know;

perhaps I might be happier without being genteel."

"For shame, David!"

"Why, *you're* not genteel, father."

"No; — but then I hanker after business, because I was brought up to it, and because I remember the time when I and your mother shouldn't have had a crust to eat if it hadn't been for the shop."

"What misery!"

"Misery! not at all: — it's much more miserable to me getting up now just to look out of window, or take a walk and come home again. I was brought up to business, therefore *I* misses it; but you were brought up to be *nothing at all*, so it ought all to come natural like."

"Well, but I don't think it does, father."

"I tell you what it is, David: I don't think I'm good company for a gentleman,—you must go away and see the world."

"Oh, that would be a deal of trouble, father; can't I stay at home and read about it?"

"No; you must go away,—you see you've nobody here to keep company with; for when I left off business and came here, I couldn't,

for your sake, associate with those I used to be hand-and-glove with, and then I believe the warmest people hereabouts voted me a right old chap—and they were not far wrong; but between the two we know nobody almost. So, just go your ways, draw for as much money as you like, and come back and tell me all about it. I shall be homesome enough without you, but won't it be a great day when you return?"

David was not accustomed to oppose his father, or any one else; therefore, when a trip to France was proposed, he gently pleaded that, though pretty well grounded in Greek and Latin, his schoolmaster had not initiated him in the mysteries of French: but being assured that English would go a good way everywhere on the coast, and that a gentleman who was nothing at all could always make himself understood, unlocking the comprehensions of all who approached him with a silver key, he yielded without further controversy,—bought a guide-book, a little book of French phrases, a few additions to his wardrobe, and then taking an affectionate leave of his only parent, he bade adieu to Cyprus Villa, Gravesend.

David had been educated among the sons of gentlemen ; therefore, though he had never seen anything of society, his manners could not be called vulgar, though they were certainly eccentric.

CHAPTER II.

With a purse well lined, and a large black leather trunk, David Dumps left home and embarked at some wharf in Tower Street on board a packet which, for the small sum of five shillings, was to convey him to Boulogne-sur-Mer in eleven hours.

There is a great charm in cheapness : but the worst of it is, so many people are beguiled into nibbling at the same bait, and, (as in the present instance,) so many are caught in the same trap. There were nearly three hundred passengers in the boat which conveyed David across the Channel ; and bad as sea-sickness must be at the best, publicity certainly adds to its annoyances.

David (accustomed to *sables* from his boyhood) had provided himself with a very handsome and costly real sable cape, which, covering his shoulders, descended to his middle : he was sitting near a young lady who appeared greatly to admire it.

“ I beg your pardon,—a very handsome tippet—real sable, I believe ?” said she.

“ It is, ma’am,” said he, turning to her for one moment, and then yielding to the necessity of putting his head over the side of the vessel. There was a pause ; and when he was again able to look before him, his neighbour said,

“ Very costly, I suppose ?”

“ What, ma’am ?” inquired David.

“ That tippet, sir,” said the lady.

“ Yes : thirty pounds.”

“ Thirty pounds !” cried the lady. “ Of course you know they will seize it at the custom-house,—that is, unless *your wife* wears it ashore.”

“ I have no wife,” said David, shaking his head with nausea.

“ Dear me ! it’s quite a pity you should lose it, as you certainly will.”

“ What ! lose my cape ?”

“ Cape ! you may call it a cape if you will, but it’s neither more nor less than a lady’s tippet ; and being so, they ’ll never let it pass on a man’s back.”

“ You don’t mean that ?” said David, “ I would not have it seized on any account.”

“ Well, sir,” said the lady civilly, “ I ’ll

mean you, put it over my shoulders, and I'll pass it through the custom-house with pleasure."

"No! will you indeed?" cried David; "then pray take it at once, for I—really—I beg your pardon—oh, what shall I do?"

And having put his thirty-guinea tippet over the lady's shoulders, he yielded to the humiliating grievance, and was carried down to the cabin, where he lay motionless as the personages long since deposited in the yard adjoining Burying-ground Buildings, Paddington Road.

Talk of Chelsea Reach and Battersea Reach, it's all stuff; what are they to the reachings outside the North Foreland, or between Dover and Calais!

David Dumps was bound for Boulogne, where his anxious parent had urged him to spend a few weeks, and a few naps: at the same time rubbing off rust, and acquiring that air and manner so essential to a gentleman of independent fortune, and so difficult of acquirement when the fortune has been accumulated in small ways of business. It is no easy matter to struggle out of those same *small ways*: all mankind are made of the same dirty clay, no doubt of it; but then they are

moulded into different shapes ; and afterwards they are baked in different degrees of heat, and some are left bare and unornamented, and others are richly and beautifully painted ; not to mention the gilding which is lavishly bestowed on some. Vain is it for the plain unadorned pipkin, after it has once been sent forth into the world, to expect to be remodelled, and adorned with flowers and gold, like the vase that graces my lady's chamber !

To descend from metaphor and tell the honest truth, David was (like ourselves) no beauty, and was, moreover, (like many that we know of,) most unfit to appear among persons of refinement. But David knew not this ; he had heard from his father that money made the man, and while he could chink his purse in his pocket, he felt confident in being looked upon as a perfect gentleman.

His landing at Boulogne, which might almost be considered his *début* in life, (for we wish to pass over his former funeral performances,) was calculated to alarm and agitate so inexperienced a youth : sea-sickness humiliates and brings down the spirit of the bravest. How dreadful is the sensation of going up, up, up, and then down, down, down ; the silly anxiety to cling to something or other, which

all the time moves with you : and then if you get a little bit better and care for drowning, which really sick people utterly disregard, what a consciousness you have of the one little plank which separates you from the fishes !

Travellers who have crossed the Alps or the Atlantic may sneer at David's sensations : he was about to breathe foreign air, and to put his foot for the first time on a foreign shore. But let Mr. Beckford boast of Italy, Mrs. Trollope prate of America, and our dear friend Major Skinner, in his own honest, unaffected, charming style, describe his varied travels so vividly, that we seem to walk with him in the East, as we have often done, and hope to do again, on less interesting ground ; still every traveller must make a beginning, and until he goes farther, (and perhaps fares worse,) Boulogne-sur-Mer had to our hero all the charms of novelty, and all the importance incidental to its being the first outlandish place on which he had set his eyes.

He at length reached the extremity of the new pier, the two sides of the harbour stretching into the sea like two long dark horns. For half an hour the tide was not sufficiently high for the vessel to venture over the bar, and

there it lay, rolling and pitching most lamentably : at length a red flag was hoisted as a signal, and it proceeded to the customary place of landing.

After a marine indisposition, what is it that the exhausted sufferer, whether male or female, is most eager to enjoy ? Surely seclusion ; a temporary retirement from the world, during which to compose the spirits, recruit the body, and restore and embellish the languid, disordered, dishevelled, and cadaverous exterior.

Will it be believed that at Boulogne-sur-Mer, among the fashionable *public amusements* may be reckoned “ going to see the packets come in and to watch the passengers land ! ” To be sure, there is nothing too insignificant to attract the attention of idle people : in country towns, a little group is always assembled to see off “ the Telegraph,” or “ the Dart ; ” and we once heard of some young ladies who resided in a village on the high road from London to Bath, who, knowing well the hour when it might be expected, always “ dressed to meet the coach ! ” Perhaps one or all may have been rewarded by winning the whip-hand of a youth on the box, or the heart of a middle-aged gentleman in the interior ; but we know nothing of the result.

The packet arrived at Boulogne just in time for the passengers to disembark before a particularly crowded and elegant audience. Those who dined early had come forth for their evening promenade, and those who dined late had not yet retired to dress for dinner. An ample space between the custom-house and the water had been marked out with ropes, and between them the unfortunates were to walk to the bureau where their passports were to be examined. Outside the ropes were ranged the eager audience assembled to witness the farcical arrival. In the front row were pedestrians, and a second and a third row peeped over their shoulders; behind these were carriages of all descriptions, all full of people!

Retreating as far as possible from the ladder, David permitted others to commence the entertainment, and with a palpitating heart he silently watched their reception. Up went a very fat man, with his very lean wife and three wretched draggletail daughters, whose recent indisposition had been such as to attract the attention of the almost equally suffering David.

At the top of the ladder, the fat man had to support the lean lady; and not well knowing what he was about, he sidled off with his

burthen, intending to get under the ropes and make the best of his way to the town. Two dark-green personages in huge cocked-hats belonging to the Douane followed them: the husband in his agitation very nearly dropped his languid lady; the whole party then followed their leaders to the custom-house door, while an audible titter ran round the gazing multitude. Round the entrance was assembled a crowd of the most vociferous biped nuisances ever heard; and these began shouting into their ears in full chorus, each one endeavouring to drown the voice of the other, and thrusting into the faces of the strangers little dirty cards. Each had a different cry, endeavouring to entice the victims to the particular hotel to which he belonged. Another, and another, and another passed up the ladder, (like criminals going to be turned off,) and still David shrank back, until at last he alone remained behind. The steward, however, instead of whispering "I'll not leave thee, thou lone one, to pine on the *stem*" (or on the *stern*) of the vessel, cried, "Come, sir, your turn now, if you please," and giving his arm, assisted him to climb.

"Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb" (when you're not used to it) a ladder, the stepping-sticks of which lie far apart, and

between every one, as you ascend, incumbered by a large cloak, a *sac de rust* in one hand, a stick and umbrella and a hat-box in the other, you tremblingly look down upon the undulating salt water!

David did not look his best; bad as his best was, he never looked so bad as at this debarkation. the large cloak was a Mackintosh of the exact colour of whitey-brown paper, which has always appeared to us a most unbecoming garment.

Having at length passed through the ordeal of the examination of passports and the rummaging of persons, David made the best of his way to the kind lady who had undertaken the safe custody of his thirty-guinea sable tippet, and putting out his hands to undo the clasp, he bowed and smiled, saying,

"I really do not know how to thank you!"

"What do you mean, air?" said the lady, putting up her hands to resist his seizure.

"I am the gentleman, — I see you don't recognise me, — I am the gentleman so much indebted to you for taking charge of that cape," said David.

"Pray what is that man talking of?" said the lady to an Englishman who acted as commissioner of an hotel.

“ He says you took charge of that fur tippet, ma’am, and he begs you’ll give it back.”

“ Oh !” almost screamed *the lady*, “ this serves me right for coming over in one of the cheap packets ! I heard these sort of men were always on board of ’em ! My tippet that my uncle bought me at Waterloo House ! Is there no law in France ?” All this was articulated so loudly, that a crowd began to collect ; and David heard it told from one to another that a swindling chap had tried to steal a lady’s tippet !

No wonder, then, that poor David, in a foreign land, without one friend, and knowing not one word of the language, should shrink from further contention. He therefore left *the lady* in undisputed possession of his thirty-guinea sables ; and having found his way to an hotel, speedily retired to his bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning David rose in tolerably renovated health ; and the only unpleasant result of his late voyage was, that his apartment, and all that it contained, appeared to be in motion. After breakfast he was determined to amuse himself ; and having inquired his way to the burying-ground, he was charmed with the novelty of its arrangement, and lingered for hours among the flowering shrubs and large wooden crosses which decorate the Catholic tombs. Such contemplations always raised his spirits and gave him an appetite : so he found his way back to the town, and turned into the shop of an English pastry-cook. Like many others of our countrymen, he went abroad principally for the satisfaction of having it to say that he had been there. French society was to be avoided, as a matter of course, and an hotel preferred where a *waiter* instead of a *garçon* was in attendance. French shops, too,

were not at all in his way ; for whenever he did enter one, he stood looking foolish on one side of the counter, staring at the *marchande* who stood on the other, and, pointing to the article he wanted to purchase, he said nothing but “ *Combien ?—hey ? how much ? qu’est-ce que cela ?* ” It was therefore far more easy and agreeable to go into a pastrycook’s shop and buy an unsophisticated bun, than to seek a *pâtissier* and indulge in a *pâté de groseilles*.

David, whilst munching his bun, could not help remarking a young lady in mourning who was finishing a tartlet. There was always something in mourning deeply interesting to him, and he looked at the lady much more often than he would have done had she been arrayed in white, pink, or blue.

“ I wonder who’s dead ? ” thought he : “ the body must be buried, or she could not be in public.”

The lady paid for her tartlet and departed ; and David, eager to follow, as he had been accustomed to do from childhood, the wearer of bombasin and crape, paid also for his delicacies, and followed the dark incognita.

Fortune seemed to favour him ; for after pursuing the lady in mourning from the bottom of the Grande Rue half-way down the Porte,

she dropped her cambric pocket-handkerchief, and, stepping forwards instinctively to pick up any of the accessories of grief, he took the kerchief and presented it to the unknown. The lady, paused, took the offered cambric, smiled, curtsied, and hastily entered her father's lodgings.

David stood like a professional mute at the door of the lady in mourning for a few seconds; but, gradually recovering himself, he remembered that he had not been so fortunate as to make her acquaintance on the very day of the burying, and glancing hastily at the drawing-room windows, he returned to his hotel. At the *table d'hôte* he sat next to an exceedingly smart young man, who seemed anxious to enter into conversation with him; and he was soon led into a detail of his morning lounge in the burying-ground, and his interesting interview with the young lady in black.

"You have not been long on the Continent, sir?" inquired the good-looking stranger.

"No, sir."

There was a pause, and the stranger's handsome dark eyes seemed twinkling with some half-suppressed joke; but, recovering his equanimity, he called the waiter and desired him to bring a bottle of champagne. It came, and

David found that his liberal neighbour had filled his tumbler at the same moment that he had taken care of himself.

“Your health, sir,” said the stranger.

“I’m sure I thank you kindly,” replied David, for the first time tasting the sparkling liquor.

“Another glass,” said the stranger, “and success to your flirtations with the heiress in black.”

“An heiress !” exclaimed David.

“Certainly ; and I, who witnessed what passed to-day, observed that she smiled on you in a manner not to be mistaken.”

“You don’t mean that !”

“I do indeed.”

“You don’t mean she loves *me* !” said David, casting a glance at a mirror, and rather pleased than otherwise at the glimpse he caught of his own countenance.

“Take my advice,” said his new friend : “go to the theatre this evening, and boldly enter Mr. Tatum’s box.”

“Mr. Tatum’s box !”

“The young lady’s name is Tatum : her mother is dead, and she is heiress to the little old gentleman in a brown wig whose box you will sit in to-night.”

"You are very good," replied David; "but I never saw him—I——"

"Come with me; I take an interest in you. I know the lady well; she expects you, and you will be well received."

David was hurried from the table, and, escorted by his amiable companion, he soon arrived at the theatre.

"Now, come here," said his friend, leading him to a box-door on the dress circle, and peeping through the little glass window inserted in it.

"Look! there they are: you must go in."

"Go in!" said David; "impossible! what will they think!"

"Oh, it is too late to recede," replied the unknown; and, knocking loudly at the box-door, he vanished.

A fair hand within immediately threw open the box, and David stood revealed, ostensibly the individual who had knocked to obtain admission.

A little old man in the front row looked sharply round; and, to David's extreme astonishment, the young lady whom he had met that morning recognised him with a smiling bow, and turning to her father, said, "Papa—the

gentleman I told you of—he has seen our friends in Bishopsgate-street.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Tatum; “I’m glad to see you, sir: I don’t think my daughter mentioned your name.” (It would have been very odd if she had, as it is quite certain she did not know it herself.)

“I am Mr. David Dumps, sir,” said the intruder in a tremulous voice.

“The son of the *rich* Mr. Dumps, papa,” whispered the daughter.

“Oh! the *rich* Mr. Dumps! Dumps! Dumps!—don’t know him, never heard of him—very possible!” murmured the old man, looking through a double-barrelled opera-glass, and pretending to attend to the play, of which, however, he did not understand one syllable.

David, as was his habit, said little; but the fair lady in black occasionally addressed him; and he observed that the handsome young man who had been the means of introducing him to this desirable family was seated in an upper box immediately opposite to them,—and as he never took his eyes off them, he naturally concluded that he took a deep interest in his success.

When the performance was over, Miss Tatum

took possession of David's arm. Old Tatum put on his great-coat, looked at our hero, and then whispered to his daughter,

"What did you say his name was?"

"Dumps, papa," replied the lady, *softly*.

"Oh,—son of a rich Mr. Dumps, hey?"

"Very rich, papa," added Miss Tatum.

"You had better go on with my daughter," said Tatum; "these steps are awkward;—I'll follow."

And so David and Miss Tatum, one of the prettiest girls in the town, walked home together by moonlight on the very first day of his arrival at Boulogne. They said little, it is true,—indeed nothing to the purpose, if the purpose of either was love: but when they parted, Miss Tatum invited him to drink tea with them the next evening; and her father, who hobbled up at the moment, after a hurried repetition of his recent whispers, condescended to second the invitation.

CHAPTER IV.

“Is it possible that I’m in love?” thought David next morning. A pause, and he went on shaving. “Is it possible that the young lady is in love with me?” Another pause,—but he simpered at himself in the glass, and gave his chin another coat of lather. The tacit response which he gave to the last query certainly was not a negative, and David went forth that day with an elasticity of step unknown to him before. At dinner he again sat by his kind friend, whose name was Arden; and when evening closed in, he was urged to keep his appointment and repair to the house of Mr. Tatum. The evening was mild; but Mr. Arden strongly recommended him to wear his ample Mackintosh, which was, as we have elsewhere recorded, the exact tint of whitey-brown paper. He himself assiduously arranged its folds, and then David went forth “a-wooing.”

His hand trembled as he knocked at the

door of the lodgings, his heart palpitated as he entered the passage; but what were his feelings when he saw the fair lady of the house come smiling from the parlour, and insisting on taking from him his cloak!—she with her own hands removed it from his shoulders and hung it on a peg.

Strange as it may seem after this act of courtesy, he saw little of the young lady during the evening. He and the old gentleman sat opposite to each other, drinking first tea, which was sent into the room ready made, and then toddy, which Mr. Tatum prided himself on brewing after the most approved fashion.

David got on wonderfully with his host, for he was by nature, education, and indeed by hereditary right, a mute,—therefore an admirable listener; and though the old gentleman seldom said anything worth hearing, he liked to twaddle on undisturbed. Half asleep and half awake, David sat looking now at the fire, and then at the candles; in the former discovering imaginary funeral processions, and in the latter coffins and winding-sheets. When the hour of departure arrived, Miss Tatum again appeared, took the whitey-brown Mackintosh from its hook, and with a smile the counterpart of that with which she had disrobed Mr. Dumps and

breathed his welcome, she now again cloaked him and saw him depart.

David never had thought of loving anybody in his life, and the notion of being beloved by a pretty girl with roses, ringlets, and a nice little foot, had never entered his head. As he slowly returned homewards, he ruminated seriously, if not sadly, on the novelty of his situation. Mr. Tatum had invited him to renew his visit on the following evening; and Miss Tatum had seconded her father's request with an earnestness and at the same time a delicate anxiety for his health that was really touching. "Be sure you come," said she; "and do not fail to wear your cloak, for the nights are chilly." Could anything be more satisfactory? He folded the Mackintosh more closely round him, and proceeded with a brisker step. David began to consider himself a man of very considerable personal attractions, and he resolved to write to his father, asking permission in due course of time to pop the question to Miss Tatum.

On arriving at ——'s hotel, he walked proudly into the coffee-room, where he found his young friend Mr. Arden apparently anxiously awaiting his arrival; for as soon as he entered the room, he ran up to him, offering to

unclasp and take from him his waterproof Mackintosh.

"Dear me, I couldn't think of such a thing!" said he, astonished at the attentions lavished on him: "I will not trouble you."

"Nonsense!" said young Arden; "it is no trouble, but a great pleasure:" and he persisted until he had unfastened the hook and carried away the cloak to a distant part of the room, where, after folding it with very great care, he deposited it on a chair, and very soon afterwards, abruptly wishing his companion good-night, he took a candle and retired to his room.

David was not sorry to be left alone, for he much preferred thinking of Miss Tatum to talking of her. At a late hour he retired to bed, and dreamt that he and the young lady were very happy together driving about Gravesend in a mourning coach.

CHAPTER V.

HUMAN happiness may be said to have reached its climax when a mortal is doubly blessed in the participation of unbounded love and disinterested friendship. Such was at this period the position of our hero: long afterwards, amid the changes and chances of an eventful career, he looked back to these brief hours of enjoyment as forming "the one green spot on memory's waste." But we must not anticipate; *sufficient for the volume are the incidents thereof.*

David saw little of the Tatums during the day. Mr. Tatum pored over newspapers hour after hour at an English reading-room; and Miss Tatum bathed and dressed, and rode on donkeys, and then dressed again;—indeed she never encouraged him to visit her of a morning. But evening after evening did he pass in her society; his kind disinterested friend always with anxious solicitude wrapping him up in his cloak before he left the hotel; and she,

with an insinuating delicacy which entirely won his heart, always taking the cloak from his shoulders and putting it carefully away before he entered her father's presence.

"You will let me introduce you to Miss T.?" said David to his friend in the fulness of his gratitude.

"No, no," said Arden; "I'm not a marrying man."

"A marrying man!" replied David; "what has that to do with it? If you *were* a marrying man, that could not interfere with an understanding already existing."

"Of course not," said Arden, laughing.

"Well; and *not* being a marrying man, you will be welcomed by Rebecca as a friend."

"You are very kind," said Arden, trying *not* to laugh.

"And really," said David, overflowing with sensibility, "I should be glad to see you friends: for my own part, I never can forget what I owe you." And he seized the right hand of George Arden, and shook it with avidity.

"*You are* a marrying man?" said George.

"I—that is—of course—if a lady evinces a predilection——"

“True; it is not in the nature of man to be repulsive: but what are your intentions?”

“Honourable, sir!” said David, drawing himself up.

“Of course: but supposing you were married, where do you mean to take her?”

“To Cypress Villa, Gravesend.”

“I could not sleep in a place so called for worlds,” said Arden with mock solemnity.

“No!” exclaimed David, whose nerves were none of the strongest, and whose slumbers, when he was a boy, had often been disturbed by his consciousness of lying so near a cemetery.

“No,” said George Arden; “I should die of fright.”

“Oh!” replied David with an hysterical laugh; “for my part, I have no fears.”

“No fears!” said his companion, pushing up his hair so that he looked at the moment in a state of terror.

“I don’t mean to ridicule the idea of ghosts,” murmured David, turning pale, and betraying to Arden his real sensations.

“Ridicule!” replied his friend; “impossible! *I* once laughed at supernatural appearances;—shall I tell you the result?”

“ Not till daylight, if you please,” said David, rising to snuff the candles.

“ No time like the present,” exclaimed Arden ; and extinguishing them both, he added, “ Sit you down there, and I will tell you the story by the dim light of the fire.”

CHAPTER VI.

GEORGE ARDEN having arranged himself comfortably in an easy chair, began as follows :—

“An old woman’s story, particularly if it had a ghost in it, was from my very boyhood received by me with a laugh or with a sneer. But this is no proof that I did not love old women. Are we not all too apt to trifle with the weaknesses of those who are most dear to us? This incredulity of mine was not, however, calculated to awaken in my elderly friends a reciprocity of attachment; and there was one old woman in particular who evidently disliked my irreverent laugh, and yet seemed determined to win me over to the full enjoyment of the pleasures of her imagination.

“And most imaginative she was; assigning to every old mansion its spectre, to every corner cupboard its supernatural visitant. She could give the most elaborate version of all old stories; and whilst engaged in her narration, she

would cast an indignant glance at him who ventured to trace her stories to the excited nerves of individuals, or indeed to any other natural cause.

"She lived in a habitation most congenial to her temperament, — an old Elizabethan mansion forming three sides of a quadrangle, with a large lofty shadowy hall, very long passages, tapestried chambers, and surrounded by a moat. In this house I have spent some of the happiest days of my life ; and it was in my boyhood, during the long winter evenings of my holidays, that I first listened to, and first ventured to laugh at, the wonderful stories of old Mistress Douce.

"Though Sally Douce was a very important personage at Maltby Hall, you are not to suppose that she was the lady of the mansion. My host was Sir Charles Maltby, a young baronet of three-and-twenty ; and my hostess, his beautiful bride, was in her nineteenth year. In the schoolboy days to which I have alluded, I had been the guest of older persons, the father and mother of my friend Sir Charles, who was then a schoolboy like myself. But the venerable pair were reposing in peace under the family pew in the neighbouring church ; and Charles, my former playfellow, being now a

baronet and a married man, invariably gave me a hospitable reception.

“Mistress Sally Douce had been housekeeper at Maltby Hall for fifty years; and having been born in a cottage on the estate, she considered herself, and really seemed to be considered by my friend, as one of the family. Charles used to be her greatest pet. Whilst I laughed outright at her marvellous narratives, he laughed only in his sleeve; and when I was affronting the venerable story-teller by a voluntary avowal of disbelief, he would soothe her into smiles by affecting to shudder, declaring at the same time that she made him afraid to turn his head, lest he should see the spectre at his elbow. Still I believe I was rather a favourite: at all events, I was always sure to hear her very best stories told in her very best style. It was indeed natural she should wish to make a convert of so great a sceptic as I professed to be.

“To you I will confess what I never could be induced to own to the old lady. Her stories, or perhaps her manner of telling them, often made a deep impression on me; and my incredulity, at first assumed because I thought the world imputed cowardice to the credulous, was afterwards persisted in, partly from a desire to appear consistent, but principally to irritate

Mistress Douce. I carried my bravado so far, that after laughing at all her ghost stories, I declared that to live in a haunted house, to sleep in a haunted chamber—nay, actually to be visited by a real authenticated ghost, would be to me delightful. Then did Sally Douce shake at me her wrinkled head, point at me her attenuated finger, and solemnly and slowly say, ‘Young man—young man, beware of what you say: if the dead can visit the living, when I am buried in Maltby churchyard, we shall meet again!’

“It shortly afterwards seemed but too probable that I should myself be the first inhabitant of that bit of consecrated ground. It was Christmas time; I was, as usual, the guest of my friend Charles: his brothers and sisters were with him, and we were all as gay as health and youth could make us. Often did we sit at midnight in some large tapestried chamber, dark with oak, and purposely left in gloom, whilst Mistress Douce’s clear and solemn voice riveted the attention of the party. When she paused, there was always silence for a minute: and then the spell was generally broken by my most irreverent titter. Then did the old lady look round upon me; the head was again shaken, the finger again pointed, and the words of warning were again repeated.

“It was during this visit that I was seized with a most dangerous fever ; and during my illness Mistress Sally Douce was my most devoted nurse ; and one day, when weak and exhausted, I said, half in earnest, half in jest, that after all it seemed probable she would receive a *post mortem* visit from me, instead of her fulfilling her oft-repeated promise. She shook her head, pointed her finger, and if she did not audibly add the usual words of warning, I saw that it was only from a consideration of my weak state.

“When I was restored to health, this same warning became quite a jest in the family ; and though I had a secret, awkward recollection of having felt chilled when her finger was pointed at me as I lay on my bed of sickness, still I strove to drown the recollection ; and when it would not pass away, I laughed more loudly than before, and affected even greater unconcern.

“When I left Maltby Hall, I was about to travel for some months on the Continent. I took leave of all my kind companions, who were assembled on the steps to bid me adieu. After entering the carriage, I called to Mistress Sally Douce, who stood curtsying and wiping her eyes at the top of the flight, saying that I

hoped to encounter a real German goblin ere I saw her again. She looked vexed and angry, and with a malicious smile which I never saw upon her face before, she shook her head, pointed her finger, and as the carriage drove off I distinctly heard the oft-repeated words of warning.

“For more than a year I rambled on the Continent ; and so rapid and uncertain were my movements, that after the first two months I received no communications from my Maltby friends. I returned by the Rhine, visiting all those places most celebrated in the legendary tales of Germany. Here the latent seeds of superstition were called into bud and bloom, and I returned to England fully qualified to be a boon companion to old Mistress Sally Douce ; to become not only an attentive listener, but to give her tale for tale.

“As soon as my arrival was announced, I received the kindest letter from Sir Charles Maltby, requesting me to pay the hall a visit. The letter concluded thus : ‘Lady Maltby desires me to say we have recently lost your ancient friend Mistress Sally Douce ; but the intelligence may be unnecessary, should she have carried her oft-repeated warning into effect.’

“I cannot describe the effect this announce-

ment of a very old housekeeper's demise had upon my health and spirits. I could think of nothing else, I could dream of nothing else; the warning seemed for ever ringing in my ears, whilst I saw the finger pointed and the old head shaking.

“I dreaded going to Maltby Hall: it was not so much that I dreaded *missing* the old lady, as that I anticipated *not missing her*! I thought that though invisible to others, for *me* she might revisit the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous.

“It was, however, impossible I should avow these feelings, and make them a plea for refusing my friend's invitation. On the contrary, I accepted it, making no allusion in my letter to the death of Mistress Douce; and on the appointed day (it was a dark day in November) I alighted at the door of Maltby Hall. My friends came out to receive me on the steps, and I hastily and involuntarily glanced beyond them to the spot where the old lady had stood on the day of my departure.

“She alone was absent from the group; yet I felt as if she still stood there, shaking her head, pointing her finger, and breathing the never-to-be-forgotten warning! I am sure my friends noticed my abstraction and guessed the

cause,—indeed they have since confessed as much; but at the time no notice was taken of it, and no mention was made of the late Mistress Douce. It was time to prepare for dinner when I arrived; and as it was getting dark, my friend escorted me to my room, and placing a light on the table, he left me to attend to my toilet. It was the same room I had occupied during my serious indisposition,—the same bed, the same furniture, all arranged in the same way. There stood the sofa on which poor Mistress Sally for many a night reposed while I needed her attendance; and by the fire I beheld, to the best of my belief, the very same tea-kettle with which she used to make my midnight tea. I would have given the world to have occupied any other room in the mansion. But what was I to do?—expose myself to the avowal of my superstitious dread!

I, who had so often laughed at the fears of others. I hastily changed my dress, and descended to the drawing-room. Dinner was soon announced, and with Lady Maltby on my arm I crossed the spacious hall. It was dimly lighted, and at its extremity we had to pass a corridor in which was the housekeeper's room,—that room which had formerly been the abiding place of Mistress Sally Douce. As we

passed I involuntarily started back ; I had glanced towards that dark passage, and there—could it be fancy ?—I had seen, far off indeed, and dim and shadowy, the form of the old housekeeper herself !

“ My companions eagerly asked me why I paused ; but having glanced that way a second time and seen nothing, I attributed my hesitation to the slipperiness of the marble pavement and proceeded to the dining-room.

“ Never had I passed so dull an evening in that house, yet never did I feel less inclination to retire for the night ; but I was at length obliged to light my candle and prepare for departure. Lady Maltby, ere she left the drawing-room, expressed a hospitable wish that I should be comfortable.

“ ‘ You have got,’ said she, ‘ the same chamber you occupied during your long illness : you will, I hope, find all your old comforts about you ; but——’

“ She did not finish the sentence ; she sighed and left the room, and I felt sure that we were both thinking of the defunct.

“ To bed I went ; and, leaving a large wood fire burning on the hearth, after a very considerable period I fell asleep. How long I slept, I know not ; but I started from a dream of the

dead, fully convinced that I had heard a noise in the room. I lay tremblingly awake for a few seconds, and all around me being quiet as the grave, I at length ventured to draw aside the curtains and peep forth. The wood fire had dwindled down to a few flickering embers,—just enough to make every part of the room visible to me, without any part being distinctly so. Far off, in the corner most dim and remote, stood the sofa as it used to stand; and there—did my eyes deceive me!—lay the form of Mistress Sally as she used to lie in the by-gone days of my typhus fever! Was it a shawl, a cloak, a garment of any kind left accidentally there; and did my fears fashion it into the semblance of a human form? It might be so; I would ascertain: certainty could hardly be more terrible than doubt.

“I raised my head, I sat up in bed; still it was no shawl, no cloak, no garment of any kind; it was the housekeeper,—nothing but the housekeeper! I know not what possessed me; there was desperation in the effort,—I called her—called the dead by the same name, and in the same voice with which in the days of my illness I used to summon the living! There was a pause, and then—oh! how shall I paint my feelings!—the form slowly arose, and

in a moment more the eyes of Mistress Sally Douce were fixed upon me ! She shook her wrinkled head, she pointed her skinny finger, and though I heard no sound, I knew by the motion of her colourless lips that she was exulting in the fulfilment of her warning words. I moved not,—I spoke not ! there we sat gazing on one another, I scarcely more alive than herself !

“ At length she moved ! She crossed the chamber, and began to prepare, as of old, one of those messes so palatable to a feverish patient ; the teaspoon came in contact with the tumbler without a sound ! She silently approached the bed ; and when she extended towards me the draught she had prepared, I felt it would be useless to reject it. Though mixed by no living hand, though bearing inevitable torpor to the vitals of the drinker, still I knew that I was doomed to drink. Oh, how I dreaded the icy coldness of that fatal potion ! The pale hand was still extended, and with rash impetuosity I put the tumbler to my lips. Oh, hot—hot—burning hot—hotter than the flames of a place that shall be nameless was the supernatural burning of that spell-wrought decoction ! With one leap I sprang from my bed to the centre of the apartment, and roaring

with pain and terror, I lay extended on the floor.

"The whole family of the Maltbys rushed into my chamber, laughing with a heartiness which could only be equalled by the heartiness of the laugh of—Mistress Sally Douce."

"Oh, Lord!" said David, pale as death: "I thought it was a ghost! What *did* you do?"

"I very soon swallowed a second tumbler of hot punch; and though I am still on the most intimate footing with the Maltby family, I shall be the very last person to vindicate their conduct."

"Vindicate!" said David; "it might have been manslaughter—it *would* have been if I had been in your place: for goodness' sake, light the candles!"

"Certainly," replied Arden; "and it is now time for you to visit the lady of your love."

Again the disinterested friend cloaked the happy lover, who again was uncloaked by the fair hands of Miss Tatum; and when the clock struck half-past eleven, she again placed the Mackintosh on his shoulders, which, on his return to the hotel, was as carefully removed, and folded by the attentive and devoted Mr. Arden.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. TATUM was a retired pawnbroker. To oblige his wife, a tall woman of high notions, the fifth daughter of an apothecary, he had, after much solicitation, given up business and taken a residence on Blackheath. Some people said, however, that, though nominally relinquished, the business was still carried on, under the rose, (under the three golden balls, we should say,) and that he had once or twice been detected standing at the door of a pawnbroker's shop over the door of which appeared the name of Tatum, with his hat off and his hands in his breeches' pockets, (strong symptoms of feeling himself at home,) long after his neighbours on the Heath had been given to understand that he was a gentleman at large. We merely state the rumour; but, pawnbroker or no pawnbroker, we will not *pledge* ourselves to its veracity.

Mrs. Tatum's great object in life was to sink the shop: Mr. Tatum, on the contrary,

dreaded prematurely sinking that which had kept him afloat. Though by no means the wisest man in the world, he had discrimination enough to observe that many men, when they left off business, left off pleasure also. It was too late to acquire new habits and turn to new pursuits; therefore when the old ones were abandoned, they led a life of inactivity: and if boys are warned that "Idleness is the root of all evil," he was aware that elderly people would do well to bear in mind that "Inactivity is the source of all misery."

Still, sink or swim, open and decided opposition to Mrs. T. was not to be thought of. Fifth daughter of a gentleman of the medical profession, she stood forth a lady in her own right; and when she did consent to pledge her hand to a pawnbroker, and in a way too which did not admit of its being redeemed, she was resolved amply to indemnify herself for the degradation by a free outlay of the profits of the shop. Mr. Tatum was considerably older than herself; so that she looked upon him rather in the light of a father,—or perhaps we should say, considering his *trade*, of her uncle. He, like all men who marry women younger than themselves, was fond and indulgent; he therefore so far yielded to her solicitations as to

withdraw from the large shop in Holborn long known as his residence, and, nominally retiring from business to Blackheath, he reserved a sort of play place, where the pawnbroker's occupation was not quite gone, in a more obscure situation in the City. Mrs. Tatum could not be quite ignorant of this arrangement ; but, believing that no one suspected it but herself, she was reconciled to it for two reasons. In the first place, it kept Mr. Tatum out of her way all the morning ; and in the second, when he did return, he often brought her little conciliatory offerings in the shape of rings, necklaces, or brooches, the unredeemed pledges of the unfortunate.

We have not yet mentioned that Mrs. Tatum one day brought him a pledge which gratified him exceedingly : we mean, his only daughter Rebecca.

Becky sucked, and thrived, and squalled, and grew, like other children ; and when she in the course of time attained the age of educational troubles, Mrs. Tatum insisted on it that the grand-daughter of Mr. Lint, medical adviser to Lady Mary Jones of Clapham Common, ought to have every possible advantage. Mr. Tatum was therefore to pay down three hundred pounds a year, and Becky

was to go to a fashionable seminary in the neighbourhood of town.

There Becky became acquainted with little ladies destined to move in a sphere very different from her own ; and she learnt that which parents in the middle ranks of life always seem to forget must inevitably be taught in these expensive seminaries—she learnt to dislike home, and to look down with contempt on her father and mother. Becky could talk French, and dance, and play upon the lute and piano ; and when she came home, the choicest instruments by Errard and Broadwood were deposited in the front drawing-room at Lavender Lodge, Blackheath : but the young lady was dull and discontented—whom was she to play to ? Papa didn't know one tune from another, always excepting that he preferred the loudest ; and as for poor mamma, she had no taste. The neighbours—such of them, at least, as had condescended to visit the retired pawnbroker and his wife—were mere Goths, no better than themselves ; people moving in no fashionable circle, and on whom Lady Sarah Highgate and Miss Maria Everington, at Miss Perfect's academy, would look down with unutterable contempt. Her holidays were therefore passed

in murmurings, and unavailing sighings after things that were unattainable. Mr. Tatum looked at his fine lady daughter, at a respectful distance, with admiration mingled with fear; for often did she reprove him for talking of "them there things," and substituting v's for w's. As for Mrs. Tatum, though often snubbed by the fair Rebecca, she felt all a mother's pride in displaying her to her visitors, and presenting her as "my daughter," though she saw her looking angry at being presented, and openly sneering at those to whom she was introduced.

We mean not to disparage any grade of society. It is easy to throw ridicule on any trade or any profession; but it is necessary, when writing a tale, to invent characters, and to put them into some situation or other. We have made our excellent friend Mr. Tatum a pawnbroker; but had he been, like the father of his lady wife, an apothecary,—or had he been a limb of the law, or a merchant, or any one of the very many people who one way or another accumulate money enough to do just what they please with their sons and their daughters,—we should say, Never send a girl, (born and bred for a humbler, and, God knows, very probably for a happier sphere,)—never

send her to an academy, where, from being associated with girls of rank and fashion, she is likely to acquire notions and habits utterly at variance with those which await her at home, and which, therefore, must inevitably hereafter make *her* miserable, or cause her to inflict misery on those who are most attached to her.

Becky Tatum at nineteen was miserable at home; and rather than remain there, she returned again to school at an age when she could do no good by going there, and when all her contemporaries had departed. Becky was therefore a sort of unconnected link between the governesses and the school-girls; restraint at her age was out of the question; she was to be considered discreet, and yet was just at the period when the watchful eye of a mother was indispensable. But a dark young man saw her, and admired her, put up his glass, and attracted her attention: she went home and thought of him; next day she met him again; and afterwards she dreamt of him; and when again she met him, she could not help looking conscious: accidentally she dropt her handkerchief, he picked it up; and when he spoke with civility, how could she avoid answering him? And so again they

met, and again they walked, and, without the knowledge of any one who had a right to control her, Becky Tatum formed an intimacy with a good-looking young man of whom she knew nothing.

From an elysium of stolen interviews, Becky was summoned to the bedside of her mother, who, scarcely sensible when she reached her, died during the next night; and though it was impossible that she could be affectionately attached to her, (as some more *homely* and happily educated children are,) still she had too much natural feeling not to feel deeply for her parent, and for the time she was most affectionate in her attentions to her father.

At length they went out to take a little walk together for the first time. They met a very handsome young man, with dark intelligent eyes. He stood before them: Becky fainted dead away; she was carried home by the interesting stranger, and her father, with his hat in his hand and wiping his face, followed as fast as he could. Becky came to herself, and introduced the charming young friend whose society had beguiled her hours when at Miss Perfect's academy.

Mr. Tatum bowed and smiled, and unbuttoned his waistcoat, and buttoned it again;

but the very next morning he made every possible inquiry, and, after all, could ascertain nothing satisfactory respecting the interesting stranger.

Mr. Tatum at once decided that it would never do. "Them there matches," said he, "ends in vant."

"It may be so, father," said Rebecca; "but I would rather welcome want with him than affluence with another: in your presence I swear to be true to him!"—and she kept her word!

CHAPTER VIII.

WE have said that Becky Tatum swore to prove true to the interesting youth with dark eyes who flirted with her when she was a superannuated member of Miss Perfect's school, and who carried her home when she made a point of fainting on Blackheath. The gentle reader cannot expect us to pass off poor David Dumps as a handsome and insinuating stranger : how then are we to account for the young lady's kind attentions to him ? Time will show.

The first months of mourning over, Mr. Tatum, as well as his daughter, wished for change of scene ; and having most peremptorily impressed upon Rebecca's mind his determination never to receive the dark-eyed stranger at his house, he embarked on board the Emerald, and he and his family arrived at Boulogne-sur-Mer in twelve hours, at the trifling cost of five shillings each person. Rebecca knew that her father's decisions, once formed,

were irrevocable. *She called him obstinate; he called himself firm.*

We must now return to our hero and his friend, the Pylades and Orestes of ——'s Hotel. They had sat together the customary period after dinner, and it was time for David to go forth to drink tea with her whom he now really considered as his intended. George Arden, as usual, brought him his cloak; and though it was really sultry, and David declared that he could not endure its weight, he insisted on putting it over his shoulders and fastening the clasp at his throat.

"And won't you walk with me?" said David.

"No."

"And do you never mean to stir out of the house?"

"Oh yes," replied Arden,—*"when it suits me."*

"To be sure, you have not the inducement *I* have," said David with a knowing look.

"It is not everybody can boast of your attractions," replied Arden with a smile.

Off went David, perspiring under the weight of his whitey-brown Mackintosh; and wanting to make a small purchase, he went into a shop.

"Will you be so obliging," said he after

choosing what he wanted, "as to take care of this cloak for me until the morning? The evening is so hot, I cannot endure it."

The civil shopkeeper of course readily assented, and Mr. Dumps proceeded to the residence of Mr. Tatum. His knock was now well known; and no sooner was he admitted, than Rebecca came forward, as usual, to take possession of his cloak. He carried none! She seemed amazed at his temerity in braving the evening air without one; and hearing what he had done with it, she earnestly entreated him to return and fetch it. Her words, her looks, were not to be resisted, and David, prouder than ever, walked back to the shop and asked for his cloak. The attentive *marchande* readily produced it; and whilst he was placing it over his shoulders, he said,

"Take care you do not lose the letter."

"What letter?"

"The letter which you have pinned to your cloak:—here it is."

"The letter!"

David took it: he saw it was addressed to Miss Tatum. How very odd! How came it there? what could it mean? He turned it over and over; it was not sealed: he opened it and read it:—

" DEAREST REBECCA,

Once more, by our carrier pigeon, I send you one line to tell you how dear you are—how dear you must ever be to me. The booby Dumps has no suspicion of our plot, and I have taken good care that your father should not see me. But I cannot exist longer in this state of suspense: consent to elope with me, and I will take care to baffle pursuit. Pin your reply under the wing of our gull: and believe me ever your devoted

" G. A."

David did not faint: he folded his cloak more closely round him, and putting the note into his breeches' pocket, he walked deliberately to Mr. Tatum's house. Again he knocked, and again Miss Tatum was ready to receive him. He silently relinquished the cloak to the fair, or rather *unfair*, hands which had so often taken it from him, and, leaving the lady in the act of rummaging in every fold for that which he knew very well she would never find, he walked into the room, where, as usual, Mr. Tatum was sitting sipping hot toddy.

" Sir," said he as soon as he was seated, " I have got that in my breeches' pocket which it behoves you as a father to take cognisance of."

"What do you mean?" said old Tatum.

"Look, sir," cried Dumps, throwing down the note; "read, and judge for yourself."

"What the devil does this mean?" exclaimed Tatum after reading the letter.

"It means, sir," replied David, "that every evening I have brought a note to Miss Tatum from Mr. George Arden, and as surely every evening I have carried back her reply."

"The deuce you have!" cried Tatum, starting up. "You dirty contemptible go-between! leave my house instantly, or, by Jove, I'll kick you out of it!"

David attempted expostulation; but finding it unavailing, he hurried away, snatching up the cloak, which no one now attempted to place upon his shoulders. He hurried to the pier; he paced it with rapid strides for an hour and more; and then, recollecting himself, he returned to the hotel, where he expected to find his false friend waiting to take from him the Mackintosh which had already cloaked so many interesting communications. But Miss Tatum had already found means to apprise her lover of what had passed; and on inquiring for Mr. Arden, he was told that he had retired to rest.

David, in a passion, was not to be so put

off, and knowing George Arden's room, he hastened to it and knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" said Arden.

"'Tis I, sir," said David: "open the door."

"Come in the morning," replied Arden.

"I'm determined to have you out to-night, sir."

"Indeed!" said Arden, opening the door.

"Oh!" cried David sentimentally: "who could have believed it!"

"You will not waste time, if you please:—name your friend."

"Friend! never talk to me of friendship again."

"I shall not attempt to justify what I have done," said Arden: "you say you intend calling me out."

"I *have* called you out!" cried David.

"*Have* called me out?"

"Yes, sir: and now that you *are* out——" added David, bursting into tears.

"What?" said Arden.

"Why, I can only say you've behaved exceedingly disagreeably, and not at all as I expected;" and with this he left his rival to his repose.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR reader will have ascertained ere this that David was not constitutionally pugnacious: he was not, however, the less sensitive; and though he retired to his chamber and disrobed himself, he could not think of sleeping, but, putting on a large and warm *robe de chambre*, he sat down and ruminated on what had passed. David's heart (there or thereabouts) was deeply lacerated. He had been led into a love affair, of which he never should have dreamt had not the false pair so egregiously deceived him. And yet, were they not a faithful pair? had they not loved each other long? and were they not in despair until his waterproof Mackintosh intervened to prevent their tears from utterly washing away hope? He thought of this; and not being naturally of an unforgiving disposition, it occurred to him that, ere he slept, he ought to return to Mr. Arden's apartment and exchange forgiveness with him before he slept

He took his candle, and with nothing upon him but his shirt, his slippers, and his large dressing-gown, he wandered forth to carry the olive branch. The hotel was exceedingly full, and boots or shoes were deposited on the outsides of most of the doors, ready for cleaning in the morning. On went David, and at last he reached the door of Arden's apartment. He knocked, and hearing no reply, he entered, and saw him enjoying a most comfortable repose.

"Poor fellow!" said David to himself; "he cannot have a bad conscience, or he could not sleep so sound;" and, sitting down on the bedside with his chamber-candle in his hand, he gave Arden a *nudge*.

"Who's that?" cried Arden, starting up.

"'Tis I," replied he, snivelling with emotion. "I could not sleep without coming again to say——"

"You abominable son of a grave-digger!" cried Arden, "if I catch you here again, I'll break every bone in your body:" saying which, he aimed a blow at him with the bolster, which extinguished his candle and sent him sprawling on the floor.

David did not wait for a second attack, but, rising and wrapping his gown around him, he hastily retreated; and, closing Arden's door, he

found himself in one of the many passages of the crowded hotel, and in total darkness.

His first thought was how to get back to his own room as speedily as possible ; and having spent some weeks in the house, he could not anticipate much difficulty in attaining that object.

He slowly but surely felt his way from passage to passage ; and his heart bounded within him as he put his hand upon the lock of the door which he knew to be his own. He entered as silently as possible ; and having thrown aside his dressing-gown and slippers, shivering with cold he felt his way to the bed, and turning down the clothes, he stepped in, and, snuggling himself up into the shape of the letter Z, he almost immediately fell into a doze.

But, oh ! brief was its duration ; for he was soon awoke by something or somebody moving in the bed, and a female voice endearingly addressed him :

“ William, is that you, my dear ? I didn’t expect you this hour ! ”

“ Good Lord ! ” cried David as he flew out of bed, “ where in the name of Heaven am I ! ”

“ Mercy on me ! it’s not his voice ! ” cried the female in the bed ; and with her two hands

she tore at two bell-ropes,—one that rang down stairs, and one that rang up.

The perspiration stood on David's brow as he groped about the room; and as he stumbled over one or two things which happened to be in his way, the screams of the female grew louder, and the bells rang more violently.

David distinctly heard the trampling of feet in the passage: lights gleamed through the crevices of the door,—it flew open, and the master of the hotel entered, accompanied by an exceedingly tall and stout gentleman.

"A man in his shirt in my Lady Betty's apartment!" said the big man; and rapidly advancing, he aimed a blow at David's head, which took effect, and prostrated him on the floor.

"And pray what does this mean, my lady?" said the pugilistic tall man.

"How *should* I know!" cried she.

"Do you mean to say that 'twasn't an appointment, may I ask?"

Lady Betty made no reply; but her Irish waiting-maid most volubly answered for her.

"And is it you that will insult your wife—the wife of your bosom, Mr. O'Flaney! For shame, sir! She went to her bed, and she went to her sleep, and that baste woke her

getting into bed!—Oh! and she'll never get over it!" And the maid wept and screamed, while Lady Betty O'Flaney buried her head in the bedclothes.

"I'll kick him down stairs!" cried Mr. O'Flaney.

"Mistook the room!" shrieked David in the agony of his fear.

The master of the hotel, dreading that murder would be committed, now interposed, and, pacifying the Irish gentleman with assurances that everything should be cleared up in the morning, he led David from the room.

Many of the inmates, and all of the chambermaids, were assembled in the passage to witness his egress from the scene of his discomfiture; and though he had but to pass to the next chamber, which was his own, they were none of them likely to forget him in his short white shirt, with his bleeding forehead and his long thin legs.

CHAPTER X.

WE hope none of our readers have ever been precisely in circumstances similar to those in which David was involved in our last chapter. Be that as it may, we think it probable that many, if not all, have, on waking in the morning subsequent to a night of perilous or calamitous adventure, experienced that heaviness of heart—that awful depression of spirits which make the sufferer long to take refuge once more in unconscious slumber.

David's slumbers, however, could scarcely be called unconscious: he had a perpetual nightmare, which assumed various alarming shapes. First, it was Miss Tatum smothering him and his affections with a large sheet of whitey-brown paper! then it assumed the form of George Arden, with dark eyes and a fiend-like smile; and then it changed to fat Lady Betty O'Flaney, who, to his horror and consternation, lay down cold and motionless by his side!

But these were the visions of the night, to pass away with the darkness: nothing peculiar had happened to him—it was *all* a dream! So thought David as he turned on his pillow; but, alas! in moving he pressed upon that part of his head which had been bruised by the clenched fist of Mr. O’Flaney, and, starting up in bed, he roused himself to a thorough and humiliating consciousness of all that had passed. But this was not all:—the future,—all that might result from the occurrences of yesterday,—rose in vivid colours to his imagination. As to Becky Tatum, he did not value her a brass coffin nail; nor did the iniquity of his false friend George Arden press upon his spirit. But the husband of the lady whose couch of slumber he had so unceremoniously invaded! what *was* he to expect in that quarter? He shuddered as he asked himself the question, and with a sensation of sickness he lay back and buried himself in the clothes. Happy would he have been at that moment to have buried his own body six feet deep in the clay of the churchyard opposite Burying-ground Buildings, Paddington Road, for he heard a loud knock at the door of his chamber.

“Come in,” faintly ejaculated David.

The master of the hotel entered with a solemn look of angry and indignant reproof.

"So, sir," said he, "I hope you have sufficiently recovered from the effects of your last night's debauch to comprehend what I have to say."

"Last night's debauch!"

"Nothing but beastly intoxication *could* account for your conduct; and *nothing* could excuse it."

"Intoxication, sir! it's false."

"Then your conduct to a lady of quality was the more inexcusable: you have brought disgrace on my house, and as soon as you have paid the bill I desire you to leave it."

"Certainly," said David, flattering himself that mine host had nothing more to say. But he did not long enjoy the delusion.

"At present, however, I come on account of Mr. O'Flaney."

"Mr. who?" said David.

"The Irish gentleman whose wife's chamber you so——"

"Go on," gasped David, not wishing to hear his misdemeanours again detailed.

"Well, sir, Mr. O'Flaney has sent his friend to you."

"No—has he!" cried David, cheering up, for

he was totally unacquainted with the usages of society on occasions like the present. "Where is the gentleman's friend?"

"In the coffee-room."

"Dear me!" exclaimed David, complacently putting on one of his stockings; "so he has sent his *friend* to me! Well, now, that is just the way a little mistake *ought* to be treated, and I'll talk it over in a friendly way the moment I'm dressed."

"Shall I tell the captain you will receive him?" inquired the hotel-keeper, not at all comprehending what David was talking about.

"Oh, certainly; if he's pressed for time, admit him;" and while the host descended to summon Captain Kilkenny, he arranged himself in a sedentary posture in his bed.

At all large watering-places we are sure to find plenty of amateurs of *friendship under hostile circumstances*; a "society of '*Friends*,'" eager to be *called in* when other people are *called out*; full of fussy excitement the moment they hear of a duel, and fearful only that on account of unavoidable delay, blood may be spilt, or matters accommodated, without their agency and intervention. But Captain Kilkenny was no such man; and when applied to by his Irish friend Mr. O'Flaney to demand of David an ex-

planation of his having so very unceremoniously availed himself of his absence to take possession of his half of the bed in which his titled lady was already slumbering in her moiety, he represented at once the improbability, under all circumstances that the invasion could have been intentional; and knowing the peaceful and unobtrusive David by sight, he now came to him fully prepared to hear the sort of explanation which the culprit was about to give.

"Mr. Dumps," said he, hardly able to keep his countenance when he beheld the melancholy object before him, "this is really a most awkward business: I am acting for my esteemed friend Mr. O'Flaney, but I trust you will look upon me as a person inclined to regard you with due consideration."

David listened in silence, and, looking at his martial figure, curled his legs up under him in the bed.

"I will avoid as far as possible any allusion to Lady Betty, whose personal attractions may perhaps have bewildered you."

"Oh, dear me, not a bit!" replied David.

"Well, it is not for me to dictate to you the line of conduct you are to pursue. I shall expect to see your friend: it is unnecessary to

mention that I am Mr. O'Flaney's friend on the occasion."

"Well, and a friend is not to be met with every day, and I quite cotton to you after what you've said. You are a good creature, I see; and if you'd just be *my* friend too, and step down to the O'Flaneys, and tell them, with my kind compliments——"

"Compliments!" exclaimed the captain, no longer able to restrain his laughter.

"Oh, don't laugh: say I mistook the room. And upon my life it's true; for as to Lady Betty and her attractions, I give you my word I never set eyes upon her until I saw her sitting up in the bed last night."

Kilkenny, instead of checking his risibility, now leant against the door of the apartment convulsed with laughter; and having in vain attempted to address a few intelligible words to David, he left him with the intention of explaining to his friends that he had not been guilty of any premeditated impropriety.

David was not long preparing for his public appearance, and in a state of the greatest alarm he descended the staircase. All the housemaids were collected, and gave him knowing winks and smiles as he passed; but he only

felt the more annoyed, and proceeded to the coffee-room in utter desperation.

Captain Kilkenny had already represented to his principal, David's manner of meeting the accusation.

The host and his bill were, therefore, the worst evils which he had at the moment to encounter; and having paid his way, most readily did he walk forth from the hotel and go in search of private lodgings.

CHAPTER XI.

DAVID DUMPS had scarcely left the hotel, when he was overtaken by George Arden, who rushed after him, seized his arm, and putting his handkerchief to his eyes, *seemed* to blubber like a child. The pacific David, who was at that very moment enveloped in the never-to-be-forgotten whitey-brown Mackintosh, endeavoured to shake him off, saying, "Sir, I've found you out; I want no more acquaintance with you."

"I know," sobbed George,—*"I know too well the shameful duplicity of my conduct. But having behaved unkindly to you, I am the more anxious to snatch you from the fatal and fathomless gulf which is now yawning at your feet."*

David started back three paces, looked at the ground, took a long breath, and said,

"Sir, there's no gulf whatsoever at my feet: and if there were, it's my belief you'd give me a push to send me forward, rather than pull at my skirts to save me."

"It is natural you should think so: but, nevertheless, listen to me, and follow my advice."

"Well, let me hear," said David.

"They are thirsting for your blood at the hotel."

"Don't say so! Who do you mean?"

"The Irish husband of that much-injured lady."

"Much-injured lady!—"

"Don't interrupt me. Mr. O'Flaney is determined to have a shot at you; and Captain Kilkenny——"

"Don't mention Captain Kilkenny!" said David, shuddering, and looking anxiously around.

"There is a way to save you yet."

"Name it."

"Come at once with me to the Column (the Boulogne Chalk Farm): we have been already suitors to the same lady, and I have pistols in my pocket."

"And what the devil difference does it make to me, whether I am shot at by you, or by them Irishmen?"

"One material difference," said Arden: "my pistols are loaded only with powder."

"A great advantage, certainly," replied

Dumps.—“ Well, then, let me consider. You mean to say, if I fight, or *seem* to fight a duel with you, you think I shan't have to meet the others in earnest ?”

“ Of course not.”

“ Oh, well : but then what is *your* object ?”

“ *You* 'll be my object presently, of course.”

“ Nonsense ! don't jest,” said David. “ Why do *you* take all this trouble ? for I know you would not do it if you had not some end to gain.”

“ Reparation for the injuries I have already inflicted on you.”

“ Indeed !” said Dumps in an incredulous tone.

“ Yes, believe me,” replied George. “ But come, we have still some way to go.” And he hurried his passive companion up a little romantic path which leads from the end of the Rue du Canal Tantilleries, towards the Column ; a charming walk in summer, when the grass is green, and a bright rapid rill as clear as crystal bounds along close to your feet. But David noticed none of its beauties, as he hurried on in obedience to Mr. Arden. At length they reached some open ground close to the beautiful Column, which was commenced by Napoleon, when his troops were in arms on

the heights, and the sea below was covered by the British fleet.

"Now," said Arden, looking round on every side, "we are arrived at the proper place: but as we have no seconds, we must avoid killing one another, as it might be misinterpreted murder."

"What horrid thoughts you have!" cried David.

"There, stand you there," said Arden, "and I will now take my position;" and he deliberately walked away.

"I see people coming this way," said David.

"I expected as much," replied Arden coolly.

"Two families at least are ere this aware of our hostile meeting, and some one will doubtless arrive in time to carry away the body."

"The body!" exclaimed David, dropping the pistol which Arden had placed in his hand.

"To be sure: what can *they* expect but *one* body, or *more*?"

"Well; but you're quite sure——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Arden; "there's no time to be lost: you fire at *me* first."

"Fire first!" said David, to whom killing a man was almost equivalent to being killed.

"Are you perfectly certain that there is no

danger—no bullet, no shot, nothing but powder?”

“Fire!” said Arden solemnly: “and remember, if you do not accede to this bloodless encounter, you will be fired at in earnest by Mr. O’Flaney.”

“Good gracious!” said David, trembling all over; “how do you do it? I suppose I’m to pull the trigger. Mercy on me! I’m going to pull—look another way!”

The pistol went off. David staggered back several paces: he heard a loud shrill scream; he looked towards the spot where George Arden had so lately stood in the bloom of health and beauty;—Heavens! could he believe his eyes! his opponent lay covered with blood, and supported in the arms of Rebecca Tatum, who uttered loud and piercing cries. David, more dead than alive, ran towards them, and falling on his knees, assisted in raising the fallen youth. At that moment Captain Kilkenny galloped to the spot, his horse in a foam, and himself in a fearful state of excitement.

“How is this!” said he; “a duel, without seconds! Rash men, why did you not confide in me?—How are you, sir?”

“Life is ebbing fast,” said Arden faintly.

"Oh!" cried Rebecca, "kill the murderer!"

"*That means me!*" exclaimed David with a voice of anguish.

"Save him," said Arden: "he has behaved like a man—nobly, bravely. Two shots had we already exchanged; he never flinched. Oh, sir, if you are a man of honour, save him!"

"A man of honour!" exclaimed Kilkenny: "do you mean to doubt it?"

Arden pointed to the crimson tide which now literally overflowed his garments.

"True," said Kilkenny; "you're in no condition to eat your words, nor anything else: you wish me to save this person; and you say he has behaved bravely."

"An Alexander, an Agamemnon!" said Arden.

"Well, I think I *do* know a way to save him: for I've a friend at anchor in the offing in his yacht; and if I can get him on board, all will be well. But then, if I go with him, what will become of you?"

"I feel somewhat revived," murmured Arden, after taking a sup out of a little brandy-bottle; "and living or dying I am happy with this lady."

"Oh, yes, I see," said Kilkenny as Arden

threw himself into the arms of his too willing Becky. "And now, you, sir, get up behind me."

He jumped upon his prancing steed ; and when seated, he leant down, and seizing David by the collar, he soon placed him on the horse behind him ; and away they went, regardless of road or path, towards the sands ; David, in his unaccustomed position, suffering very severe bodily pain, and yet now and then venturing to turn his head towards the fatal field, where he could still distinguish the bleeding body of Arden, supported by the fragile frame of the susceptible Rebecca.

CHAPTER XII.

It was no easy matter to convey Mr. Dumps under existing circumstances from the shores of France to the deck of the yacht *Waterwagtail*; but Captain Kilkenny was full of expedients; and, before evening, David, enveloped in his Mackintosh, was tossing about in an open boat, and in due course of time was hoisted into the larger and safer vessel.

Captain Kilkenny had not thought it necessary to enlighten Mr. Cockle, the owner of the yacht, respecting David's adventures and difficulties: he merely introduced him as a gentleman in a bad state of health who was recommended a cruise;—and certainly he looked sufficiently ill to verify the captain's words.

Somebody has somewhere very sensibly remarked, "that men are never ridiculous for not possessing any particular accomplishment: it is the endeavour to *seem* what they are not which justly exposes them to ridicule."

No one ever learned from experience the truth of this axiom more thoroughly than Mr. Cockle.

His father was a respectable professional gentleman, who resided in an inland county ; and being a younger son, his allowance was small, and his expectations not great. It so happened, however, that he was fortunate enough to win the affections of a young lady of very large fortune. She was of age and under no control ; they were very shortly married, and, after the customary elegant *déjeûné à la fourchette*, they set off in a travelling-carriage and four, to spend their honeymoon at Brighton.

Mrs. Cockle had been educated at a fashionable boarding-school near the metropolis, and she had acquired notions of fashion and style that were perfectly astonishing to her less sophisticated husband.

When the residents of an inland county first look upon the sea, the event becomes an era in their existence. Beautiful was the day of their arrival in Brighton : the vast deep lay before them, radiant with sunbeams, and so calm that the pretty little pleasure-boats seemed to slumber in its bosom.

Said Mrs. Cockle to her spouse one day,

"My dear, I love the sea: let us take a marine mansion."

"Certainly," said Mr. Cockle: "whatever you wish, my love."

"And," added the bride, "you must become a member of the Yacht Club: there's nothing so stylish as a yacht."

When a wife who has enriched a husband proposes agreeable ways of spending her own money, where is the man who could refuse her? Cockle had seldom put his foot in a boat, and therefore could not flatter himself that he was quite fit to undertake the management of a large vessel. "But," thought he, "the sea looks a mighty agreeable sunshiny place, and by the end of the season I dare say I shall be as good and practical a seaman as any in the club."

So from Brighton they proceeded to Portsmouth, and from Portsmouth to Cowes, the head-quarters of the association of amateur nautical noblemen and gentlemen.

Mrs. Cockle had a cousin, a Mr. Lorimer Lomax, an exquisite of a certain age. He was charmed to hear of Cockle's seafaring propensities, readily offered to introduce him to the commodore, and declared that a very excellent first-rate yacht was to be sold, the pro-

perty of a young gentleman who could no longer contrive to keep *it* (or *himself*) afloat.

Mr. Cockle's arrangements were soon made ; he became master and commander of the cutter " Water-wagtail," of three hundred tons burden, and he made his appearance on the parade in a straw hat, a blue check shirt, large rough blue trousers, and a sailor's jacket ornamented with the button of the club.

When entering on a new pursuit, he would have liked to settle down calmly and gradually into the habits to which he had hitherto been unaccustomed : he would have liked to feel his way, as it were, like a cat on a wet floor, putting out first one paw, and then the other, ere he too rashly ventured from dry land. He would have preferred remaining at anchor for the first month or so ; and, indeed, had it been possible to draw up the " Water-wagtail " high and dry upon the beach, he would have deemed that a satisfactory arrangement. But friends are always injudicious, and he had unfortunately *enlisted* at an unlucky moment. The whole squadron was on the eve of departure for Cherbourg, and Cockle was congratulated on having joined them when an opportunity offered for at once enjoying a delightful voyage, visiting a French port, and

looking at a French king and all the royal family. A little qualm came over Mr. Cockle as he listened to the enumeration of all these promised joys: but Mrs. Cockle was in an ecstasy, and her cousin, Mr. Lorimer Lomax, kindly offered to accompany them. They were to put to sea the next day, and were therefore in no small bustle making preparations.

"The dawn was overcast, the morning lowered;" and when Mr. Cockle looked out of his window, and saw the clouds and heard the wind whistle, he at once decided that there could be no embarkation that day. But he was no longer his own master; everybody but himself seemed to exult in what they were pleased to call "the fairness of the wind:" to him it sounded very foul; and when he looked at the sea and saw a quantity of what landmen call "*white horses*," he felt as if something had disagreed with him, and said in a tone of supplication to a "*brother sailor*" who stood near, "Of course we shall not sail to-day?"

"Not sail!" he replied: "to be sure we shall; this is just the very breeze we wanted."

It was now too late to retreat. He had heard something about orders from the commodore about the time and order of sailing, and the

exact place allotted to the "Water-wagtail:" but of all this he knew nothing; his people on board had the management of the vessel—and unfortunately of himself also, and now came the moment for going on board.

It really blew hard, not in Cockle's estimation alone, for it had done that all day; but the people about him cast ominous looks at the skies, and seemed to his nervously excited imagination to consider them doomed creatures. When they got to the steps in front of the club-house, they found the little boat which was to convey them to "the Water-wagtail" tossing about like a mad thing—now up, now down, and the water splashing over her.

"It's a tempting of Providence to think of getting into her," said Cockle; and his wife, clinging to his arm, said, "Had we not better go back?"

But Mr. Lorimer Lomax, though no sailor himself, seemed desperately bent on destruction to all the family. He and the boatmen hurried them into the boat, and enveloped them in cloaks. Away they went; the shore receded, and the happy people walking on the promenade grew less and less; and Cockle longed to tread the deck of his newly-purchased

yacht, thinking that of two evils the big ship would be better than the diminutive punt. They got into fearfully rough water ; a strong current of the tide met the wind—so somebody said, and the meeting seemed to be anything but amicable. Mrs. Cockle screamed and leant on her husband on one side ; and on the other, Mr. Lomax pinched his arm black and blue.

“ Luff, luff ! ” said the man who steered the boat ; and thinking that he looked at him, and that very probably their safety depended on his instantly doing some incomprehensible thing, Cockle shouted in reply,

“ In the name of Heaven, what do you mean by ‘ luff ’ ? Mary, my dear, luff if you please : Lomax, do luff if you happen to know how.”

The steersman gave a grim smile, and addressing Mrs. Cockle, said, “ Trim the boat if you please, ma’am.”

“ Mary,” ejaculated Cockle, “ the man speaks to you.”

“ What is it ? ” inquired she.

“ Trim the boat, ma’am.”

“ Mercy on us ! she don’t know how,” said Cockle. “ He talks as coolly as if he wanted her to trim a bonnet ! ”

“ Sit,—there,” said the sailor, pointing to a place

And, thankful that at last he spoke intelligibly, Cockle took Mrs. C. by the shoulders and placed her in the identical spot.

“There’s your yacht,” said the sailor :
“they’ll soon bear down upon us.”

“*Down upon us !*” cried Cockle, looking at the great black body that came nearer and nearer every moment. “Oh, how shocking to be run over by one’s own Water-wagtail !”

A rope was thrown to them which hit Cockle in the right eye and blinded him ; the boat bumped against the side of the yacht, and he lay prostrate on the flat of his back. His wife fainted, and was borne up in a state of insensibility ; and he followed, holding two slippery ropes, and with difficulty keeping his feet upon what he was afterwards told was the accommodation ladder :—a pretty *accommodation* truly !

He stood upon his own deck, he leant against his own mast, and his own sailors pushed him about and seemed to consider him in the way. His legs lost all strength ; he sank upon a seat ; his head dangled over the side of the vessel ;—he was sea-sick ! All fears left him, and with them all natural affections. He cared not three straws about his inestimable wife ; he cared not for his guest, her cousin ; he gave no

orders, he knew nothing that was going on. He was conscious the weather was getting worse and worse; but he was getting worse and worse himself,—and what is weather to a dying man?

He knew nothing about the commodore, nothing about the squadron. All night he lay on his berth in the cabin, opposite to his wife, who lay upon hers; and, their beds being on something like shelves let into the wall, he thought of bodies in a mausoleum.

One lamp suspended from the ceiling cast on them a melancholy light. Oh! how it swang to and fro!—and the chairs, how they tumbled about! And then the horrid clamour of shouting men, and flapping sails, and creaking masts, and howling winds, and rushing waters!

Now don't laugh at us, dear, inestimable Captain Marryat, should you ever be tempted to skim these pages: we know nothing about the ocean and the big ships, and for that very reason have we for once ventured into deep water. We, as landsmen, have yachted, and have suffered; and we just venture to tell of that which we have seen. Verily we are indebted to you for many a hearty laugh, and

many an hour's amusement ; and, in place or out of place, we venture to offer you our little note of admiration.

One of the sailors came down into the cabin occasionally, and gave Mr. Cockle brandy, which he passively swallowed : and then brandy was given to Mrs. Cockle ; and *he* had just sense enough left to observe that *she* drank it passively too.

“ Is there any hope ? ” once said Cockle.

“ Hope, sir ! what d ' ye mean by hope ? ”

“ Ah ! you may well say that ! ”

There was a pause ; and then Cockle added,

“ I trust we 're near land ? ”

“ We must keep clear of land : land is the worst place we could see on such a night as this.”

How people may be mistaken ! Land was what Cockle had been longing for !

“ Could we not go on shore ? ” he inquired.

“ If we don't keep a good look-out, we *shall* go on shore,” said the sailor.

“ Well ? ” asked Cockle.

“ And in ten minutes the Water-wagtail would go to pieces, and every soul on board perish.”

Cockle groaned, and so did Mrs. C. ; and they

heard a responsive groan from Lorimer Lomar, whose body had been *laid out* in a sort of closet which served many purposes.

We will no longer dwell upon their present situation. After beating about for two days and two nights, the wind continued strong against them, and at Cockle's earnest entreaty, rather than in obedience to his command, they made Boulogne harbour, where they remained four-and-twenty hours; and then, the weather having tranquillised a little, they put to sea again, and, having picked up Mr. Dumps in the offing, the Water-wagtail proceeded on her course towards Cherbourg.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAILY experience proves that sea-sickness, however distressing it may be for the time to the poor body, leaves little or no impression on the mind. People go on shore, and eat and drink, and enjoy themselves ; and then, forgetting all they suffered on board the vessel, they go voluntarily and put their feet in it again. Thus it was with Mr. and Mrs. Cockle, and Mr. Lorimer Lomax : a few hours on land had driven from their recollection the ups and downs of a seafaring life ; and though when poor David was picked up from his open boat in a state almost reaching death, Mr. and Mrs. Cockle were already beginning to feel odd, Mr. Lomax's health seemed entirely re-established, and he was able to do the honours of the Water-wagtail, and give the new-comer a civil reception.

David both in body and mind seemed to suffer a total prostration of strength ; he looked

pidly moving

When the
high land, th
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any of the otl
their residence
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"If the wi
steward, who c
their little com
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shall not make c

"Make Cherl

"what can he i
was no such ph
you 'd never see i

"Be quiet, go
max.

"Now do for g
the time: if you

tled by his manner ; " but you do nevertheless betray symptoms of illness. The blood——"

" Blood !" murmured David, hastily glancing at his hands.

" The blood has left your cheeks," proceeded Lomax, " and your best weapon against the enemy—nay, don't stare so !—your best weapon, I say, will be a little glass of brandy !"

" Give it me," said David ; " I do indeed require it !" and he grasped the proffered cordial with a trembling hand.

Mr. Lorimer Lomax, though no longer young, still retained the *remains* of much appertaining to life's spring-time. He had the remains of a good figure, a good face, and good spirits, and also the remains of an exceedingly pleasing voice. At fifty or thereabouts he still suspended his guitar by a pink silk riband over his shoulder, and he still found young and pretty girls ready to listen to his songs and their accompaniment. Unfortunately there were no pretty girls on board the *Water-wag-tail* ; but Lorimer produced his guitar, and, glancing round at his small but select audience, (as they always say at a country theatre, where there are not enough people present to pay for the candles,) he struck a few chords, and said,

" Love and
Cockle from
of twang-ling
strel of the W
balled.

THE

She was watching for
dawn of day ;
'Twas not the hour
delay !
Her gay disguise, her
side ;
Impatiently she breath
replied ;
And then she vow'd she
for her,—
For when she heard the
to stir.

'Twas the long-expected
come at last !
She gave a ready answer. fi
And. st---

III.

Alas! 'twas not by *her* alone that signal had been heard;—
 The lover's rival, lurking there, had caught the whisper'd
 word;
 And bloody was his dagger's point as from the scene he
 rush'd,—
 And cold and pale the lover lay—the voice of Love was
 hush'd!
 And, all unconscious of her doom, came forth his plighted
 bride:—
 None saw her shed a tear—at morn the dead lay side by
 side!*

There was a pause, and then a deep groan
 from Dumps attracted all eyes towards him.

“The dead lay side by side!” said he, shud-
 dering as he made the quotation.

“There is no such love now-a-days,” mur-
 mured Mrs. Cockle from her place of horizontal
 refreshment.

“I don't know that,” replied her husband:
 “there are disappointed rivals still, who would
 be ready enough to take the life-blood of the
 man who——”

David rose up in his seat, as if to speak;
 but his lips moved without producing any
 sound, and he sank down again.

“Had *I* ever killed a man,” said Lorimer,

* This ballad is about to be published at Mr. Falkener's,
 with music by Mr. Knight.

"I should expect to see him in every dark corner."

"No! should you though?" gasped David.

"Yes, in this cabin now, as we sit by the nominal light of that swinging lamp. Look round you: can you not imagine spectre forms, eyeless sockets, yawning lipless mouths- —?"

"Where?"

"Here, there, everywhere!" said Lomax, pointing in turn to different recesses, while David's eyes followed the movements of his finger.

David sighed deeply.

"But supposing," said Lomax, "that our hands were stained with blood,—that we had sent a fellow-creature to his last account!"

"His last account!"

"Ay, what would be our feelings then?"

"His *last* account!" again ejaculated David, turning up the whites of his eyes.

"Why, it's to be hoped so: you would not have a murdered man come back again?"

"Not for the universe!"

"No, to be sure not; nor any other dead man. Nobody is long missed; and when once our place on earth has been filled up, had we the power to return——"

“What then?” said Mrs. Cockle, who felt as if she was not long for this world.

“Why, then, finding that we had no place at all, either in the home we called ours, or in the hearts of those we loved, we should soon voluntarily go and lay ourselves down again in the grave where we have been so soon forgotten!”

“Lord! how melancholy!” said Cockle.

“I will give you a more cheerful view of the same picture,” said Lomax; and taking a little manuscript book from a desk near him, he added, “Having sung you a song, I will now read you a story.”

THE POST MORTEM COGITATIONS OF THE LATE
POPULAR MR. SMITH.

“I died on the first of April 1823.

“Go to the parish church of Smithton, ask the sexton for the key, and having gained admission, walk up the left-hand side aisle, and you will perceive my family pew, beneath which is my family vault, where my mortal remains are now reposing; and against the wall over the very spot where I used to sit every Sunday, you will see a white marble monument: a female figure is represented in

The history of

St. L

7

"This sense
of my position
always been my
aim in society
ardently desired
head of my own
parish, I was desirous
of Smith was also
or a commendation
wonder, therefore,
a monument."

say it too, that there never was such a husband. My life was one smile, my sayings were conciliatory, my doings benevolent, my questions endearing, my answers affirmative. I silently studied the wants and wishes of those around me, and endeavoured to arrange my leavings so that each legatee should hereafter bless that 'dear good fellow Smith,' always at the same time having recourse to a pocket-handkerchief. I perpetually sat for my picture, and gave my resemblances to all the dear friends who were hereafter to receive the 'benefit of my dying.'

"So far I have confined my narrative to the humdrum probabilities of everyday life. What I have now to relate may seem less probable; but it is not one jot the less true. I was anxious not only to attain a degree of popularity that should survive my brief existence; I panted to witness that popularity,—unseen to see the tears that would be shed,—unheard to mingle with the mute mourners who would lament my death. But *how* was this privilege to be attained? Alas! attained it was; but, for the sake of others, never will I reveal the means. I wanted to watch my own weepers, nod at my own plumes, count my own mourning coaches, and read with my own eyes the

laudatory paragraph that announced my demise in the county newspaper. What devilish arts I used, what spells, what incantations, never will I make known: suffice it to say that I attained the object of my desires. Two years was I to have at those I left behind me; one exactly a month after my demise, the second on that day ten years.

"And now for the result of peep the first; for I will begin with the most satisfactory part of my own 'post mortem examination.'

"My own house (or rather, the house that had been mine) looked miserable enough,—the servants in deep mourning, and a hatchment over the door. My wife (my widow, I mean) was a perfect picture of weeds, in the extreme of the fashion. She heaved the deepest sighs; she was trimmed with the deepest crape, and she wore the deepest hems. The accumulated depth of her despondency was truly gratifying. In her right hand was a cambric handkerchief, in her left a smelling-bottle, and in her eye a tear.

"She was closeted with a man; but it was no rival. It was in fact a *marble masonic meeting*. She was giving directions about my monument, and putting herself into the attitude of lamentation in which she wished to be repre-

sented, (and is represented,) bending over my urn. She shed a torrent of tears, and said something about her 'sainted Anthony.' Our common breakfast urn, which had acted the part of a funereal one, was now removed, and my widow, looking over the estimate, grumbled at the expense! knocking off here and there some little ornamental monumental decoration, bargaining about my inscription, and cheapening my tombstone.

"She was interrupted by the entrance of a milliner, who was ordered to prepare a black velvet cloak lined and trimmed with ermine. 'Alas!' thought I, 'the widow's "inky cloak" may well be warm; my marble covering will be cold comfort to her.'

"A housemaid was blubbering on the stairs, a footman sighing in the hall. Happy late husband that I was; surely *I* caused this grief: and when I heard that a temporary reduction in the establishment had been determined on, and that the weeping and sighing individuals had just been discharged, I felt the soothing conviction that leaving their living mistress tore open the wounds inflicted by the loss of their late master.

"My dog howled as I passed him, my horse ran wild in the paddock, and the clock in my

own sitting-room maintained a sad and solemn silence, waiting my hand to wind it up.

"Things evidently did not go on in the old routine without me; and this was soothing to my spirit. My own portrait was turned with its face to the wall. 'What, after all,' thought I, 'is the use of a portrait? When the original lives, we have something better to look at; and when the original is gone, we turn it wrong side outwards!'

"On the village green the little boys played cricket. What of that? a boy will skip after his grandmother's funeral. On a dead wall I read, '*Smith for ever.*' — 'For ever!' thought I; 'that is a long time to talk about!' Close to it, I saw '*Muggins for ever;*' the letters equally large, and much more fresh. Muggins was my parliamentary successor, and his politics were the same as my own: this was cheering; my constituents had not deserted my principles,—what more could I expect? The '*SMITH*' who they said was to be their representative '*FOR EVER,*' was now just as dead as the wall on which his name was chalked!

"Again I retired to my resting-place under the family pew in the church of Smithton, quite satisfied that at the expiration of ten

years I should take my *second peep* at equally gratifying, though perhaps rather softened evidences of my unabated popularity.

“The ten years of my sepulchral slumber passed away, and the day arrived for my *second* and *last* peep at my disconsolate widow, and wide circle of affectionate friends.

“The monument opened ‘its ponderous and marble jaws,’ and invisibly I glided to the gates of my own domain. The old lodge had been pulled down, and a cottage gone mad, all thatch and creepers, had been erected in its place. I could not find my way to my own house! the road had been turned, old trees cut down, new plantations made, ponds filled up, lakes dug; my own little ‘Temple to Friendship’ was not to be found, but a temple dedicated to the blind god had been erected in a conspicuous situation. ‘Ah!’ thought I, ‘*her* love is a buried love! to *me*, her “sainted Anthony,” this temple has been dedicated.’

“So entirely was the park metamorphosed, that I did not arrive at the mansion until the hour of dinner. There was a bustle at the hall-door; servants in gay liveries, carriages, lights! a dinner-party! Well, doubtless my

widow, still in the sober grey of ameliorated mourning, had summoned round her the best and dearest of *my* friends.

"Unseen I walked into the dining-room. I cast my eyes round the table.—Oh, what bliss was mine! at the head sat my widowed wife, all smiles, loveliness, pink silk, and flowers; not so young as when I last beheld her, but very handsome, and considerably fatter.

"At the foot—(oh, what a touching compliment to *me*!)—sat one of my oldest friends, Mr. Muggins. He did the honours well, (though he omitted to drink to my memory!) and the only thing that occurred to startle me before the removal of dinner was my widow's calling him 'my dear.'

"When the dessert had been arranged on the table, she called to one of the servants, saying, 'John, tell Mary to bring the children.'

"What could she mean! who was Mary, and what children did she wish to be brought! I never *had* any children. Presently the door flew open, and in ran eight noisy, healthy, beautiful brats! The younger ones congregated round the hostess; but the two eldest, both fine boys, ran to Mr. Muggins, and each took possession of a knee! What was my asto-

nishment when he said, *addressing my widow*, 'My dear love, may I give them some orange?'

"But the mystery was soon explained. Sir Marmaduke Muggins filled his glass, and said to his son, 'This is your birthday, Jack; here's your health, my boy, and may you and your Caroline long live happy together! Come, my friends, the health of MR. AND MRS. MUGGINS.'

"So then, after all, I had come out on an exceedingly cold day to see my widow doing the honours as Mrs. Muggins!

"'When is *your* birthday?' said Sir Marmaduke to his daughter-in-law.

"'In June,' she replied: 'but I have not been in the habit of keeping birthdays till lately. Poor Smith could not endure birthdays to be kept.'

"'What 's that about poor Smith?' said the successor to my house, my wife, and my other appurtenances. 'Do you say Smith could not bear birthdays? Very silly that: but *poor* Smith had his oddities.'

"'Oddities?' said a dear old friend of mine, smiling and pointing to his head. 'Yes, yes,—to say the *least* of it, he *had* his oddities.'

"'Oh!' said *my widow*, and *Mr. Muggins's wife*, 'we cannot *always* command perfection.

Poor dear Mr. Smith meant well; but every man cannot be a *Muggins*.' She smiled and nodded down the table; Mr. Muggins looked pained, as well he might, and then the ladies left the room.

“ ‘ Talking of Smith,’ said Sir Marmaduke, ‘ what wretched taste he had, poor man ! This place was quite thrown away upon him ; he had no idea of its capabilities.’ ”

“ ‘ No,’ replied a gentleman to whom I had bequeathed a legacy ; ‘ with the best intentions in the world, Smith was really a very odd man.’ ”

“ ‘ His house,’ added another who was my frequent guest, ‘ was never agreeable : it was not his *fault*, poor fellow.’ ”

“ ‘ No, no,’ said a very great crony of mine : ‘ he did everything for the best ; but, between ourselves, Smith was a bore.’ ”

“ ‘ Indeed, considering his oddities,’ said the man who before had pointed to his head, ‘ it was a fortunate thing he died when he did. There was something wrong *here* in his family :’ and he pointed to his head again.

“ ‘ It is well,’ said Mr. Muggins, ‘ that talking of him has not the effect which is attributed to talking of another invisible personage. Let him rest in peace : for if it were

possible that he could be reanimated, his reappearance here to claim his goods and chattels, and above all, his wife, would be attended with rather awkward consequences.'

"So much for my posthumous curiosity! Vain mortal that I was, to suppose that after a dreamless sleep of ten long years, I could return to the land of the living, and find the place and the hearts that I once filled still unoccupied! In the very handsome frame of my own picture was now placed a portrait of John Muggins, Esq.: mine was thrown aside in an old lumber-room, where the sportive children of my widow had recently discovered it, and with their mimic swords had innocently poked out the eyes of what they had been pleased to denominate '*the dirty picture of the ugly old man!*'

"My presumption has been properly rewarded: let no one who is called to his last account wish, like me, to revisit earth. If such a wish were granted, and, like me, he returned invisibly, all that he would hear and see would wound his spirit; and were he to return *visibly in propria persona*, mortifying indeed would be his reception.

"I came not from my family vault to read a sermon or a lecture; and yet, '*the post mor-*

tem cogitations of the late popular Mr. Smith are not without a moral!"

"Good gracious me!" cried Dumps when Lomax had finished his story; "now do tell me, is all that strictly true?"

"Strictly true, sir!" replied Lomax, assuming a mock air of defiance. "Pray, may I ask what would your friend Captain Kilkenny have said to you, had you doubted for an instant *his* veracity?"

"Don't mention it," said David: "I believe it all."

"By-the-by, as I see our excellent friends are now in a calm slumber, my story having acted as an opiate, may I ask to what *peculiar* circumstances the captain alluded when he entreated us to take you on board?"

"He did *not* tell you all, then?"

"He told us nothing, except that you had innocently involved yourself in a dilemma which rendered a speedy departure desirable."

"Innocently!" exclaimed David with a shudder.

"I take it for granted, there was a lady in the case?" inquired Lomax.

"A lady, sir?—*two* ladies, sir!" murmured David.

"Two! You are a bold man. And there was a rival, of course?"

"There *was* a rival, certainly !"

"Not waylaid and murdered, like the lover in my song, I hope?"

David looked piteously, but made no reply.

He slept not that night: whenever he closed his eyes, the bloody form of George Arden lay before him, supported by the frantic Rebecca. David had "murdered sleep," and he expected to "sleep no more."

True it was that Arden had himself placed the pistol in his hand, and had given him the signal to fire; equally true that he had no notion the pistol was loaded with any deadly missile. Consolatory considerations these: but then, again, what could reconcile him to the idea of having in cold blood killed a fellow-creature,—a youth in the fulness of his bloom, and with "all his imperfections on his head?" Blood was on his hands; and were he that night to go to a certain place called "Davy Jones's locker," he knew full well that the vast ocean—nay, "all the perfumes of Arabia, would not sweeten" those large fists.

All night he watched the monotonous swinging of the lamp, and listened to the din of many noises. The next morning he heard guns firing and people huzzaing, and was informed that, the weather having abated, they had ven-

tured nearer the French coast, and were actually off Cherbourg. But so slow had been their progress, that they had arrived only just in time to be too late: the royal family had just left the town, and the members of the yacht club were preparing to set sail to the Isle of Wight. The crew of the Water-wagtail saw in fact on landing nothing but a French town involved in that extreme state of dulness which invariably follows a period of unusual gaiety and excitement.

Mr. and Mrs. Cockle had learned a lesson which they were neither of them likely to forget. A party of pleasure is proverbially a painful undertaking; but its annoyances are generally petty ones,—an *al fresco déjeuner* under an umbrella, or a July day passed with five or six people in a *closed* landau. Such dilemmas are farcical; but the pleasuring of the crew of the Water-wagtail might have ended in a *deep* tragedy.

Let it be a warning to all landsmen whose minds are bent upon salt-water excursions. 'Tis rash for children to play with edge-tools; but it is ten times more rash for land-lubbers to try to make a plaything of a vessel in a gale of wind.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. and Mrs. Cockle, with Mr. Lorimer Lomax, having refreshed and refitted, again entered the *Water-wagtail*, leaving Mr. Dumps, who repaired to the English consul to obtain a passport to pursue his journey by land. A passenger by an English gentleman's yacht, sick of the sea, soon obtained the requisite document; for he wisely said not one word about Boulogne, leaving the worthy functionary to suppose that he had started from England with Mr. Cockle. From Cherbourg he departed by the diligence, with no fixed plan save a determination to avoid Boulogne-sur-Mer.

He rambled far and wide, to the right and to the left, visiting Havre, Rouen, Dieppe, and Amiens; and then, finding that his direct route to England lay through the dreaded seaport, he again diverged and proceeded to Arras, which is a very fine old fortified town, and thronged with military.

David put up at the *Hôtel de l'Europe*, and,

being rather indisposed, he remained there for some days without meeting an individual who even attempted to speak a word of English,—not very cheering to a man of a serious turn of mind: and now, unfortunately, he felt

“ Never less alone than when alone ;”

for the bleeding body of George Arden invariably filled the vacant chair next to him, or occupied the path he had chosen for his ramble a few paces in advance of him.

Arras became no longer endurable: so he determined to change the scene and proceed to Lille. He found himself the sole occupant of the *coupé* of the diligence: but by his side sat his ever-present imaginary companion; and the screams of Rebecca rang in his ears, mingled with the unintelligible chat of the people who occupied the *intérieure*.

Suddenly the diligence stopped, and two *gendarmes* rode up and spoke loudly to the *conducteur*. After examining a paper, poor David was pointed out to their notice; and they immediately rode to the two doors of the *coupé*, one looking in at each window, and both talking in the unknown tongue to the amazed and panic-struck occupant.

David could not understand one word they

said ; and when the *conducteur* and some of the passengers from the *intérieure* joined the party and attempted to explain, they added to the clamour, without conveying any intelligence to the solitary Englishman. At length, as is usually the case in such emergencies, the principal performers resorted to pantomime : they took him from his private box, and when he was upon his feet in the muddy road, they pointed to a led-horse, intimating by expressive action that he must mount thereon, and pointing vehemently back the way they came.

Now David began a little by-play of his own : he opened his eyes wide, and shook his head, to express astonishment at their conduct, and ignorance of its cause ; he felt in all his pockets for his passport, and shook his head again when he could not find it ; he put his right hand on his left side, where he had been told his heart was, to express innocence, and he made a low bow, to intimate his respect for the gentlemen in the large cocked hats, at the same time putting his right foot on the step preparatory to taking the seat from which he had been so unceremoniously dislodged. But at that moment a horrible recollection came over him, a remembrance of his crime,—murder ! What *but* murder could cause the go-

again obliged to ascend to his saddle ; and after suffering martyrdom, and enduring for upwards of two hours the ridicule of the Frenchmen, whose pantomime was now perfectly intelligible, he arrived at the town which he had so recently left, and instead of again occupying his apartment in the Hôtel de l'Europe, he was provided with a little room elsewhere, the door of which was carefully locked on the outside.

David had a miserable time of it ; haunted by the ghost of the man he had murdered, and visited by none but grim-looking men, with whose language he was utterly unacquainted. He was carried before a large dark dignitary, who was seated with several other important-looking persons ; and he naturally and very justly concluded that they were equivalent to a mayor and corporation : what they were called in French was to him a mystery. The large dark man slowly and distinctly questioned him ; and seeing that the prisoner comprehended him not, he repeated his queries so loudly as to startle one whose nerves were already shattered. It is a very odd thing that we are all apt to resort to this expedient of shouting when we talk to people in a language they do not understand, though we never yet met

with any one who comprehended ~~us~~ the better for it! David shook his head, and equally loudly made a little address in English: and then all the heads of all the dignitaries were shaken in token of ignorance.

This seemed a very bad business: "For," said David to himself when he got back to his prison, (having nobody else to say it to,) "if I, am hung at Arras, (and Arras hangings are celebrated!) I shan't even have the satisfaction of making an intelligible last dying speech!"

At this moment the key grated in the lock, the door opened, and an English gentleman entered: the town had been ransacked for an interpreter, and Mr. Mildmay, an elderly gentleman, having been discovered at one of the hotels, he was requested to take the trouble of calling on poor David.

"I am sorry, sir," began Mr. Mildmay; but the solitary started up at the sound of the first English word, and ere he got further evinced an intention of throwing himself into the stranger's arms, which he, however, frigidly avoided, and, seating himself, again commenced:—"I am sorry, sir, to find an Englishman thus situated: is there anything I can do to serve you?"

"Talk to me—in the name of Heaven talk to

me!" cried David; the tears, as Jaques says, "coursing one another down his innocent nose."

"I am aware of the crime you are said to have committed."

David shook his head and clasped his hands.

"May I venture to hope that you are able to give me an assurance that you are not guilty?"

David shook his head again.

"Unhappy man, I pity you!" said Mr. Mildmay: "let me look at your passport."

"I have lost it."

"Lost it!" said Mr. Mildmay incredulously.

"Yes, sir; and now pray tell me, if you can, what am I to expect?"

"The principal witness against you——"

"Witness!" interrupted David.

"Yes, the only one, as I understand."

"It *must* be Captain Kilkenny," thought David.

"—Was written to the day you were seized, and she is expected to-morrow," added Mr. Mildmay.

"*She!*" exclaimed David; "it *must* be Rebecca!"

"I do not know her name," replied Mr. Mildmay, rising to take leave. "If, unfortunately, you are guilty of the crime laid to your

charge, she will of course identify you." The English gentleman then calmly withdrew, fully convinced that he had been talking to a very great rascal.

David threw himself upon his miserable bed, and gave way to the most fearful forebodings. Rebecca, then, had herself set out in pursuit of her lover's murderer, determined, no doubt, to exterminate him. Dreadful were his sufferings during that long dark night, and when morning dawned it brought him no comfort: on the contrary, it only brought him nearer to his fatal interview with Rebecca, the avenger! At length many voices were heard below, and, as is often the case, one female voice prevailed above all the others; the door flew open, and Mr. Mildmay entered with her. But David saw them not; he had fallen with his face on the bedclothes.

"*Voilà le prisonnier, madame,*" said he; and the female, rushing forward, took David by the arm and vigorously pulled him round. But he saw not the form of Miss Tatum, he heard not her accents! He beheld a middle-aged Frenchwoman, who exclaimed,

"*Oh! mon Dieu! ce n'est pas lui que nous cherchons!*"

"Not the man!" said Mr. Mildmay.

"Not Becky Tatum!" cried David, and fainted away.

It was long before the exhausted sufferer was sufficiently recovered to be moved to the hotel. Mr. Mildmay then informed him that he had been by mistake arrested instead of an Englishman who had committed forgery.

"Forgery!" said David: "I am innocent!"

"So it appears: but when I asked you two days ago whether you would assert your innocence, you refused to do so."

"Innocence!" said David, colouring up. "If I had known I was accused of forgery, I should readily have sworn I was innocent *of that*."

"Oh!" thought Mr. Mildmay, "the fellow *has* a crime on his conscience after all!"

"You are not going, sir?" said David.

"Yes, I am about to proceed towards Calais."

"I am going to travel that way too: may we not go on together?"

"You must excuse me," said Mr. Mildmay coldly: "and pray let me urge you, before we part, to endeavour to profit by your recent terrors,—for I plainly saw that you *did* fear the result."

"Terrors!" said David.

"Yes; if you have any guilty secret——"

"Mercy on me!" ejaculated David.

"I do not ask for a confession; but if you have, endeavour to atone for the past by the rectitude of your future conduct."

Mr. Mildmay left him; and on the following day David again entered the *coupé* of the Lille diligence, feeling, as the ladies beautifully express it, "as well as could be expected after his confinement."

The first intelligence David heard in his native country was the death of his father. His successor in his old shop had furnished him with a funeral: the mute was silenced, and the mourner mourned.

David Dumps became more serious than ever; — he had a decided nervous malady, an abhorrence of society, and a sensitive shrinking when he felt that anybody was looking at him. He had heard of the invisible girl: — he would have given worlds to have been an invisible gentleman, and to have glided in and out of rooms unheeded and unseen, like a draft through a keyhole. This, however, was not to be his lot; like a man cursed with creaking shoes, stepping lightly and tiptoeing availed not; — a *creak* always betrayed him when he was most anxious to creep into a corner.

At his father's death he found himself pos-

sessed of a competence and a villa ; but he was unhappy. He was known in the neighbourhood : people called on him, and he was expected to call on them ; and these calls and recalls bored him to death.

He never in his life could abide looking any one straight in the face,—a pair of human eyes meeting his own was always actually painful to him. Now he could endure it less : he fancied everybody would read his secret sorrow, his hidden guilt, in his face. It was not to be endured. He sold his villa, and determined to go to some place where, being a total stranger, he might pass unnoticed and unknown, attracting no attention, no remarks. He went to Brighton, consulted an eminent physician, and was recommended sea-bathing and horse-exercise.

The son of the weeper very naturally thought he had already “too much of water.” He, however, hired a nag, as unlike the high trotting animal he had once bestrode in France as possible, took a small lodging, and as nobody spoke to him nor seemed to care about him, he grew rather more comfortable.

David was a swimmer ; and when after a few quiet rides he began to feel more at home upon the animal, he used to trot him to a little snug

recess in the cliff near Rottingdean, where he tied him to a post, and then, having deliberately undressed himself, he would plunge into the water.

One day—one luckless day, just as he had thrown off his last garment, it occurred to him that he might indulge his steed with a salutary dip by mounting him and urging him gradually into the advancing tide.

He did so, and sat erect upon the saddle like an equestrian Adam. The horse demurred, the waters splashed around him and upon him; but David's clothes were safely piled upon a rock, and he heeded not the sprinkling. Suddenly, one billow more turbulent than the rest burst upon the shingles; the horse started, became utterly unmanageable, and dashed off at full gallop towards Brighton with David, naked, as he was born, sitting on his back!

Imagine the misery of his situation! The shy, the modest David, hastening involuntarily towards the most public promenade in a state of nudity! In vain he pulled at the bridle; swifter and swifter rushed on the infuriated animal. He flew along the crowded cliff—he passed the Steyne, thronged with fashionables listening to the band of a regiment of hussars. The music stopped—the ladies fainted—the

gentlemen gazed in amazement — the children shouted. Still, on—on—on went this unhappy Mazeppa, until he arrived at the door of his lodgings, where the horse stopped so suddenly that the rider flew head over heels, and pitched in a sitting posture on the pavement !

He was carried to his apartment more dead than alive ; and during the evening crowds assembled round the house, and servants in livery were sent to inquire after the poor lunatic gentleman.

Life became a burthen to him ; — he was a marked man ! — *He*, whose only wish was to pass unnoticed, unheard, unseen ; — *he*, who of all the creeping things on the earth pitied the glowworm most because the spark in its tail attracted observation ; — *he* to become the talk and the laughing-stock of a town like Brighton ! He packed up in a hurry, went by a night-coach to London, and the very next day proceeded to Cheltenham, where we hope to find him in the next chapter.

TH

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the chamber adjoining his own at the Plough Hotel, Cheltenham.

The occupant of the next chamber was now heard walking about the room, putting by and locking up things ; and then, humming the air of the song, he passed along the passage and descended the stairs.

David rarely sought the society of any human being ; but the Cockles had been fellow-sufferers with him in his never-to-be-forgotten voyage, and so much had since their parting befallen himself, that he felt some curiosity to know how they had also fared. He therefore descended to the coffee-room, where, as he anticipated, he found Mr. Lomax, who received him very cordially, exclaiming,

“ Ah ! my little doleful Dumps !—*you* here ! Well, I do hope the waters will prove a Lethe to you, and banish the recollection of all that used to bother you so on board the Water-wagtail.”

“ Thank you kindly,” said David : “ and where are Mr. and Mrs. Cockle ? ”

“ Oh, gone down——”

“ Gone *down* ! ” ejaculated David.

“ Pooh ! hear a man out, can’t you ?—Gone down to his place in Somersetshire ;—not down in the Water-wagtail,—plenty of Cockles down

there already : but he has sold the yacht — a change for the better, I think."

"No doubt of it," replied David. "Are you going to stay here?"

"To be sure I am," said Lomax. "The height of the season, and very gay. To-day Lady Thimblorig has a dinner, and Mrs. Tittytops gives a ball : you shall go with me to the latter if you like, and dance with the prettiest girl in the room."

"Excuse me," replied David.

"Oh, nonsense ! you must."

"My mourning !" interrupted David ; "my respected parent not dead six months !"

"Oh, I beg your pardon,—quite right : and what do you mean to do?"

"Why, though Cheltenham is to be my head-quarters, I think of making a few excursions : Tewksbury, Malvern, and perhaps Worcester, to begin with."

"Well, then, in ten days or a fortnight, when you return, I shall expect you to become a bright star in the hemisphere of fashion."

David shook his head, and began his preparations for his trip ; and the next morning he arrived at Tewksbury in time for breakfast.

We ought ere this to have described our hero. He was rather *embonpoint*; but fat was not with him, as it sometimes is, twin brother to fun: he wore a wig, and the expression of his countenance was indicative of the seriousness of the turn of his mind.

He alighted from the coach at the principal inn; and the landlady, when she met him in the hall, started and stared, and then with most assiduous attention ushered him into her best parlour. He took her aside and briefly explained that retirement, quiet, and a back room to himself, were what he particularly wished to enjoy.

"I understand you, sir," said the landlady with a simper: "a little quiet will be agreeable by way of change."

"It will indeed," replied the traveller solemnly.

"I hope you will find everything here to your liking," said the hostess; and still, almost giving way to a laugh, she withdrew.

"Frank," said she to the head waiter, "who do you think we've got in the blue parlour! I knew him the minute I clapped my eyes on him!"

"And who is he?" said Frank.

"Why, the great actor Mr. Liston! and

he's dressed just as I saw him at the Haymarket, the only night I ever was at a Luuoon play; and 'twas 'Killing no Murder,' and he was Polly Belly, or some such name; and he's dressed just the same now, all in black, with *such* a hatband, and great white weepers!"

This brief dialogue will account for much disquietude which subsequently befel our ill-fated Dumps. People met him, he could not imagine why, with a broad grin! As they passed, they whispered to each other, and the words "inimitable!" "clever creature!" "irresistibly comic!" evidently applied to himself, reached his ears. He became more serious than ever: but the greater his gravity, the more the people laughed.

One night—*could* he believe his ears!—as he ascended the stairs, with a flat-candlestick in his hand, intending to go early to his bed, he heard Frank the waiter whisper to Mary the chambermaid, (and they looked at him at the moment,) "*Killing no Murder!*"

Was, then, his secret known!—his *fatal* secret! He rushed to his chamber, bolted the door, and spent a night of sleepless anguish.

The next morning, with a broader grin than usual, the landlady ushered a gentleman into the blue parlour, and then retired, giving a

knowing glance at her guest as she shut the door.

“ My name, sir, is Opie,” said the unknown.

“ Is it, sir ?” replied David.

“ I hope you intend gratifying the good people of Tewksbury ?”

“ Gratifying ! what *can* you mean ?”

“ There would not be a box to be had,” said Opie, bowing.

“ I always look after my own boxes,” replied Dumps.

“ As you please,—but you *will* come out ?”

“ Come out ! to be sure, if it ’s fine.”

“ What do you mean to come out in ?”

“ What I ’ve got on,” said David sulkily.

“ Oh, that is so like you !” said Opie, laughing ; “ you really *are* inimitable : but what *character* ?”

“ Character !—*here* ?—the Stranger.”

“ The Stranger ! *you* !”

“ Yes, *I*.”

“ And you really mean it ?”

“ Why, yes, to be sure,—I ’m just come :” and David, thinking he had been talking to a madman, walked away to the window ; and when he again looked round, Mr. Opie was gone. Shortly afterwards he saw a man very busy pasting bills upon a dead wall opposite ;

and so large were the letters, that he easily deciphered,

The celebrated Mr. Liston in Tragedy !

This Evening,

THE STRANGER !

The part of the Stranger by Mr. Liston.

Dumps had never seen the inimitable Liston—indeed comedy was quite out of his way ; but now that the star was to shine forth in tragedy, the announcement was congenial to the serious turn of his mind, and he resolved to go.

He ate an early dinner, went betimes to the theatre, and established himself in a snug corner of the stage-box. The house filled, the hour of commencement arrived, the fiddlers paused and looked towards the curtain, but, hearing no signal, they fiddled another strain. The audience became impatient ; they hissed, they booted, and they called for the manager. Another pause, another yell of disapprobation, and the manager, pale and trembling, appeared, and walked hat in hand to the front of the stage. Mr. Opie cleared his throat, bowed repeatedly, moved his lips, but was inaudible amid the shouts of “ Hear him ! ”

At length silence was obtained, and he spoke as follows :—

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,—I appear before

you to entreat your kind and considerate forbearance. I lament as much as you the absence of Mr. Liston; but in the anguish of the moment one thought supports me,—the consciousness of having done my duty. (*Applause.*)

“ I had an interview with your deservedly great favourite performer this morning, and everything appeared well understood between us. I have sent to the hotel, and he is not to be found. (*Disapprobation.*) Under these distressing circumstances, I have only to entreat your indulgence for Mr. Grimshaw, who on his *début* last week in the part of Jeremy Diddler was so favourably received. He will kindly read the part of the Stranger. (*Mingled hissing and applause.*)

“ For Mr. Liston’s safety my mind is intensely anxious. I have been informed that he dined early, and left the hotel, saying he was going to the theatre. What accident can have prevented his arrival, I am utterly at a loss to——”

Mr. Opie now happened to glance towards the stage-box. Surprise! doubt! anger! certainty! were the alternate expressions of his pale face and widely-opened eyes; and at length, pointing to Mr. Dumps, he exclaimed,

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is my painful duty to inform you that Mr. Liston is now before you: there he sits,—the gentleman in black, I mean, at the back of the stage-box; and I trust I may be permitted to call upon him for an explanation of his most extraordinary conduct."

Every eye turned towards David, every voice was uplifted against him. The man who could not endure the scrutiny of *one* pair of eyes now beheld a house-ful of them glaring at him with angry indignation.

"That is not Liston!" said one.

"Not Liston?" cried another.

"An impostor!" vociferated a third.

"A hoax!" became the universal shout.

His head became confused; he had a slight consciousness of being elbowed through the lobby, of a riot in the crowded street, and of being protected by the civil authorities, against the uncivil attacks of the populace.

He was conveyed to bed, and awoke the next morning with a considerable accession of nervous malady.

He soon heard that the whole town vowed vengeance against the infamous and unprincipled impostor who had played off a practical joke on the public, and at dead of night did

he escape from the town of Tewksbury in a return-hearse going to Malvern, with which he was accommodated by his tender-hearted landlady, who never confessed to him that she had been the real cause of his discomfiture. On arriving within a mile of Malvern, he crept from his dark and most appalling vehicle, and with his carpet-bag he walked disconsolately to the hotel.

The balmy air and the tranquillity of Malvern were truly congenial to poor David's feelings after his recent very serious discomfiture : his spirits soon rose, and he gained sufficient courage to dine at the public table. Chance had placed him next to a very smart and pretty girl, who during the first days of his entering into the society of the boarding-house interested him much. She, like himself, seemed to have "a silent sorrow" somewhere : she often sighed, and sat in a state of evident abstraction, unconscious of the plate of soup before her and of the morsel of fish which found its way into her mouth. She ate very little ; and that little seemed only taken to quiet the apprehensions of her tall thin mamma, or appease the threatening anger of her short fat papa. The only thing which she really seemed to relish was her one glass of wine ; she raised it to her lips,

raising at the same time her blue eyes to the ceiling, and then slowly drained it, as if drinking to the health of the little bronzo Cupid from which the central chandelier was suspended. When her glass was replaced upon the table, she relapsed into a dreamy cogitation, and never spoke until her lady-mother rose to leave the room ; and then she languidly followed.

David spoke to nobody, and he considered it an unusual instance of good fortune having been placed next to a gentle being who never spoke to him. His apartment was next to that occupied by this interesting girl : this he ascertained from occasional meetings in the passage, and the necessity of standing aside to let her pass ; and though they never exchanged a word, a neighbourly feeling was established between them.

One morning he heard the sound of lamentation in that chamber ; the voice of the little lady was raised to the highest note of its compass, but was at length drowned by the basser tones of her father, and David could not avoid hearing part of the conversation.

" I 'll never believe it !" cried the young lady :
" never !"

" Do you think your father would tell a lie !" screamed her mamma.

"You acknowledge that you expected him to write to you?" said her father.

A burst of tears was the only reply.

"Has he not deceived you?—have you received one line from him?" inquired the old gentleman, who well knew she had not, he having intercepted and burnt three dozen letters and a half.

"I will not believe that he is false," cried the daughter.

"Oh!" screamed her mother, "I should like to beat you!"

"Silence!" said the more artful and systematic papa: "do not upbraid poor Lavinia; she will have enough to mortify and vex her, poor thing, when she knows all."

"What do you mean?" inquired Lavinia.

"It *must* humiliate a girl so, to think she has been breaking her heart for a fellow who don't care twopence for her."

"Thank goodness *I* never did that!" said the senior of the two ladies: "nobody knows how your papa solicited *me*."

"I beg you will tell me what you allude to," exclaimed Lavinia, wiping her eyes and assuming composure. "If I *have* been deceived in Captain Claverton, tell me so at once; prove it, and I will give him up."

"There's my own Lavy!" said her father. "Mind, now, if I convince you, you have promised to forget him."

"I did not say *that*, sir; I feel that I should be promising what I never could realise, but I will never speak of him; I will endeavour to obey you in all things: is there any other person that you wish me to marry?"

"No, not just now," replied her father: "but I wish you not to frown at every man you meet, as you have done since that fellow——"

"Do not abuse him, sir; state what you know against him, and then drop the subject. He may be false, and I may be led to acknowledge it; but let it be understood between us that he is not to be censured before me. However culpable, however ungrateful he may be, I am at least unchanged, and will never indulge in such pitiful revenge as verbal abuse."

"He is going to be married!" said her father, unbuttoning his waistcoat and buttoning it up again, while he watched the effect of the shot he had fired.

"Married!" cried Lavinia; "to whom, sir?" and she deliberately, and apparently calmly, left her seat, and walked over to her father.

“To a wealthy widow at Richmond,—Mrs. Pemberton Pole.”

“How long, sir, have you known this?”

“We have known that he withdrew his pretensions to yourself ever since I wrote to him stating that you were entirely dependent, and that you would never inherit a shilling from me if you married him.”

“You wrote to him to that effect?”

“I wrote to him to that effect,” replied her father, looking her full in the face; for *now* he was telling the truth.

“And he explicitly stated that he withdrew his pretensions?”

“Of course,” answered the old gentleman, looking another way, for the captain had done no such thing.

“You should have told me this before,” said Lavinia, returning to her seat, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

“We did not like to distress you,” said her mother.

Lavinia looked at her for a moment with a piteous smile, but did not reply.

“This Mrs. Pemberton Pole is the widow of a very rich distiller, not young, not good-looking, not in the best society,” exclaimed the old man, wiping his spectacles.

"Poor fellow! I pity him," said Davinia. "You are quite sure that what you state is correct?"

"Quite."

"He will then be wretched; and as for me—but I will not speak of myself: surely it must be a painful reflection to you both."

"What do you mean?" inquired the elder lady.

"To think that you have made a fellow-creature miserable; one, too, who never injured you,—one who, on the contrary, evinced the warmest affection for your only child."

"Miserable! not a bit of it; rich widow,—nonsense—happy as the day is long."

"You, who have seen so much of Captain Claverton, must know that he is not the man to be happy after making such a marriage."

"Well, miss, then why does he marry?—what is it all to me, or your mother? Captain Claverton is nothing to us."

"He was nothing to either of you when my mother met him at Brighton, and, fancying that he was the eldest son of Sir Harry Claverton, sought him out, never rested till she was introduced to him, and made me dance with him, and accept his attentions at a time

when I cared not for him, and when I'm certain he never thought of me."

"Very wrong of your mother," said the old gentleman, unbuttoning his waistcoat; "I admit *that* was very wrong indeed."

"And was it not equally wrong in you to ask him almost daily to dine with us?—what could he suppose but that his proposal would be accepted?"

"I was unguarded, certainly," and the waistcoat was buttoned up again:—"but if younger sons *will* intrude themselves into society, they must take the consequences."

"We were not to blame, then," added Lavinia, "if, thrown *by you* so much together, we became attached; the error was your own, but the punishment falls heavily on us."

"You must be more wary in future, *my dear*," said her papa to her mamma.

"And you must not be so egregiously foolish, *my love*," said her mamma to her papa.

"These recriminations are idle," exclaimed Lavinia. "I will not say one word more about him:—tell me candidly what is it you wish me to do; it is indifferent to me now. Is there any other person——"

"No, not exactly——"

"Why," interposed her mother, "that gentleman who sits next to you daily at dinner--"

"I am not to marry *him*!" cried Lavinia in a tone of voice not flattering to David, who heard almost all that was said.

"Marry him! - no -- that is, there's no knowing: somebody said he seemed to have plenty of money; and a quiet independent gentleman is not to be met with every day."

"He is very quiet," replied Lavinia, mentally contrasting David and Captain Claverton.

"All I ask is, don't sit silent and sulky by *him*, or any other marriageable young man: *I* never did at your age," said her mother.

"I will try to do as you wish," answered Lavinia.

"That's a good Lavy," cried her father, kissing her.

"You know our only thought is your happiness," added her mother, kissing her on the other side. And thus poor Lavinia was fondled by the two beings who, actuated by worldly and mercenary motives, had involved her in an attachment, from which it appeared that they expected her to recede at the word of command.

At the dinner-hour that day, David, as usual,

was seated next to his hitherto taciturn companion. She looked pale, and had evidently been weeping, and she evinced no inclination to address him ; but her mother, who seemed anxious to divert her thoughts, after requesting him to give her some sweetbread, said, in a bland and gentle voice, utterly unlike that which had startled him through the partition in the morning,

“Lavinia, *dearest*, these are excellent ! Mr. Dumps, pray oblige me by helping Miss Carey ?”

David, of course, did as he was desired ; and then, clearing his voice, made some sage remark respecting the bad weather past, the little gleam of sunshine present, and the very fine days which it was to be hoped were to come. Miss Carey was equally common-place in her reply, and then they both relapsed into silence.

“You drink white wine, I perceive, Mr. Dumps,” said old Carey : “Madeira, or Sherry ?”

“Sherry,” replied David.

“Quite right,—less acidity ; my bottle is Sherry also. Allow me the pleasure of taking wine with you ?”

And David went through the evolutions of flogging, smiling, bowing, and drinking.

"Dumps is an uncommon name?" observed Mrs. Carey.

"It is a strange name, truly," replied the possessor of it, wondering whether she meant to be rude.

"Strange! oh, not at all," added the lady. "Let me see,—Dumps? Dumps?—surely we have met with the name somewhere?" and she appealed to her husband.

"Dumps?" replied Mr. Carey: "can't say I know it."

"Are you of the Derbyshire Dumpses?" inquired the mother, trying an experiment.

"I'm not aware of it, if I am," replied David; "in fact I never attempt to conceal that my father made his fortune in trade."

"Quite right," answered Mrs. Carey, satisfied with the word *fortune*, but hoping that no one else at the table had heard anything about *trade*, in case anything should occur between him and Lavy. "I honour the man who avows it; though *our* family, by the way, is very antient!"

(Mr. Carey's grandfather had been what is called a cow-man.)

"But surely we *did* meet some nice per-

son of your name somewhere. — Dumps? — yes, I'm sure of it; perhaps your elder brother?"

"I have no brothers," replied David.

"Indeed! an *only* child?" inquired Mrs. Carey.

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Carey with an air of satisfaction; and though there was an arch smile on Lavinia's lip, she thought to herself, "Would that my mother had always been equally minute in her inquiries!"

"Do you know many people at Malvern?" inquired Mrs. Carey.

"No, ma'am, none," replied David.

"Indeed! Oh, we have a charming little circle here,—confined, of course, but infinitely interesting:—Will you favour us with your company at tea this evening? You will meet dear Mrs. Hoby, the *sweet* creature, who has the *sweet* children, and whose husband writes the *sweet* books!"

David accepted this luscious invitation, but saw very little of the lady so celebrated for sweets, being thrown completely into Lavinia's society; and though she must have been annoyed at her mother's manœuvres, she was too well-bred and too good-natured to allow an

inoffensive stranger to suffer for the annoyance inflicted upon her by another person.

Day after day, and week after week, did Mrs. Carey possess herself of the pliant Mr. Dumps: living under the same roof, there was no chance of escape, and indeed Miss Carey's manners were so gentle and pleasing that he delighted in her society, and was never happier than when walking by the side of her donkey.

As to loving her, such an idea never entered his imagination; he was not the man to love first. Had she evinced any partiality for him, it was quite impossible that it should not be reciprocal; but for David seriously to *fall* in love, as it is called, with a girl so very young, so very pretty, would have appeared to himself just as presumptuous and absurd, as if he were to take it into his head to get some queen divorced from some king, that he might be enabled to marry her majesty.

Lavinia really rather liked him than not, (a negative sort of compliment truly when applied to the estimation in which a gentleman is held by a young lady;) he was quiet, amiable, and inoffensive;—and she had taken good care to prevent his being misled as to her appreciation of him, having more than once alluded

to a *something* which preyed upon her mind, and which was perfectly intelligible to David, after the conversation which he had once involuntarily overheard.

But the discreet and kindly-intentioned precautions of a good honest-hearted girl like Lavinia are utterly unavailing when there is such a mother at her elbow as Mrs. Carey. After daily involving David, almost whether he liked it or not, in the necessity of attending on Lavinia, or openly avowing his disinclination to do so, she one day advised her daughter to remain at home on account of some imaginary cold, and then seated herself at her tambour-frame to receive David alone.

"Ah, Mr. Dumps!" said she as he entered; "how are you?—You look pale!—are you *sure* you are quite well? Do let me send you a *little* remedy to-night. No!—well, of course you know best; I am always a *fond* foolish creature about people who are in any way connected with me."

David, not quite understanding her, which in truth was often the case, sat down and said nothing.

"You know *dear* Lavy has a cold? No!—Oh yes, a *sad* cold, poor *dear* interesting girl! People talk of her beauty,—I scarcely think of

it;—her many excellent mental qualities are what I value!”

“Yes, to be sure,” said David.

“What will become of me when she marries, it is impossible for me to guess; yet marry she must, sooner or later!”

“Of course,” replied David.

“But, poor little innocent dear, I do believe it is a notion that has never entered her mind.”

“Indeed!”

“Or, if it ever has, not till *late*ly,” added Mrs. Carey, looking at David.

“Oh!” replied he, looking at Mrs. Carey.

Mrs. Carey looked down on her embroidery, and did not quite know what to say next.

“Do you know this flower?” inquired she at last.

David rose, looked at a confused jumble of red, blue, yellow, and green worsteds, and replied, “Yes, a devil in a bush!”

“Be quiet, Mr. Dumps!” cried the matron affectedly, and tapping his shoulder with her finger. “’Tis heart’s-ease.”

“Ah!” ejaculated David.

“Heart’s-ease, Mr. Dumps!” said Mrs. Carey sentimentally, looking up at her guest. “How rarely woman’s lot!”

David made no answer, because he had no-

thing to say; so Mrs. Carey was obliged to proceed.

"You men! you naughty men are our bane! how often do you trifle with the first affections of an unsophisticated heart! You look shocked:—do not, pray, misunderstand me. I know you are incapable of such conduct;—you appreciate the treasure thrown in your path. I need not ask one overflowing with benevolence like yourself, what are your intentions towards my too susceptible Lavinia?"

David opened his eyes very wide, now for once perfectly understanding Mrs. Carey, but he could not frame a reply.

"I have confided in you," said she; "and I know you will not abuse my confidence. She is *indeed* a treasure!—is she not?"

"Why, — I, — oh! — a treasure? — Miss Carey, — of course quite a treasure!" stammered David.

"One calculated to make any man happy?"

"Happy? — why as to that — oh, if you mean to ask me—I should say—Of course *any* man would be happy!"

"Your frank and honourable avowal of admiration is highly creditable; and to put you out of all suspense, I will leave you, and at once communicate what has passed between us

to Lavinia and Mr. Carey. By the by, I ~~never~~ saw dear Mr. Carey take to anybody as he has done to you!—it quite surprised me,—something quite *paternal* in his manner; and you who have had the misfortune to lose your parents will appreciate that advantage. As for myself, I need not speak of *my* partiality; it seems to me almost an infatuation!" And Mrs. Carey went up to David, took his hand, and rubbed her cheek against his mouth; and it was not until she had left the room, that he recovered himself sufficiently to comprehend that he was in a false position, having apparently proposed to Miss Carey, and kissed her mother, without having the least intention of doing either one or the other.

Lavinia's astonishment knew no bounds. "Proposed for *me*?"

"Yes, and in the most delicate way. I quite felt for him, poor young man! his melancholy is *very* touching."

"But surely it was impossible he should be ignorant of—of—" And Lavinia paused, and burst into tears.

"He knows all," replied Mrs. Carey, "and he honours you for the magnanimity with which you have——"

"Oh, pray do not talk of that," interrupted

her daughter: "do you really believe he loves me?"

"Devotedly."

"And you are satisfied with him?"

"I have made every inquiry, and his income must, I am sure, be considerable."

"Then he is all you and my father can wish; and, as for me,—'tis well he is no worse."

"You consent to receive him, then?"

"Is my father satisfied?"

"Your father is now closeted with Mr. Dumps."

"Then in your hands and his I place my life: my happiness has long been out of the question."

In the mean time Mr. Carey, having received a hint from his wife, had gone to the room where she had left her dismayed visitor.

"Well, Mr. Dumps," said he, "glad to see you; Mrs. Carey has told me all; give me your hand."

David extended his hand, and submitted quietly to the shaking which it underwent. "Sir," said he, "you do me much honour, but——"

"I think I've heard you say that all your money is in the funds?" interrupted Mr. Carey:

"in these times the best place for it; I have no doubt we shall understand each other."

"I beg your pardon," replied David, "but I had supposed that your daughter had formed some other attachment."

"Very right to ask the question: I honour you for coming to the point. A mere childish fancy, nothing more; and the moment she made your acquaintance, she gave it up, and seemed to think of it with shame and regret!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, to give you a proof, she has never mentioned it since, I give you my honour, never!"

"Well," thought David, "I am a fascinating creature, that's clear."

It was difficult even for so expert a manager as Mrs. Carey to keep her two puppets in order; but she did contrive to make Lavinia believe that David was really in love with her, and that his seriousness was occasioned by a very natural dread that her former attachment to Captain Claverton would prevent her ever consenting to a marriage with him. Lavinia had suffered so severely herself, that she could not endure the idea of making David miserable, and as she felt certain that her parents would never let her alone till she had

married somebody, she really thought it would be as well to be led to the altar by David at once.

David certainly was not in love, and her imputed love for him amazed and bewildered him: it was not what he wished, the very last thing, indeed, that he ever should have sought; and when he looked forward to his marriage, and going through life by the side of a creature so young and so fair, he really felt alarmed and almost inclined to advise her, as a friend, to turn the matter over seriously in her mind, and weigh all the contingencies well, before she took the irrevocable step.

All seemed progressing towards the consummation so devoutly, or perhaps it were more just to say, so diabolically wished by Mrs. Carey, and her worldly-wise spouse, when an event occurred which utterly disarranged all their plans.

David was one morning sitting in his private room, when the door was violently thrown open, and a tall handsome young man entered, panting with excitement, and trembling with agitation.

"Your name is Dumps, sir, I believe," said he.

David, in astonishment, bowed assent.

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"What ! a coward ! refuse me the satisfaction of a gentleman !"

"Pray hear me for one moment patiently."

"Proceed," replied the captain contemptuously.

"I am going to reveal to you, what no other human being has a suspicion of: it is not many weeks since I *did* go out to shoot, and to be shot at."

"Well?"

"*He* fell,—horrible recollection !—I will never fight again."

"Will you give up the lady, sir?"

"Oh dear me !" exclaimed David, "I would not interfere with anybody for the world ; and if *she* had not taken a fancy to me, I——"

"Puppy !" cried Claverton.

"Well, I don't wonder you should say so," said David. "But were *I* to accede to your wishes—and I give you my word it's just the same to me,—I'm certain her worthy parents will never let me off."

"*Worthy* parents ! a couple of contemptible—But no matter, I insist upon your going instantly to Mr. Carey, and telling him you resign your pretensions to his daughter."

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"I come here formally and unequivocally to relinquish my pretensions."

"What!" exclaimed Carey, starting up.

"I have said precisely what I mean," said David demurely.

"Give up my daughter!"

"Sorry I'm prevented having the honour of——"

"Don't talk to me as if you were sending an excuse to a dinner-party; I'm not to be trifled with!"

And the short fat man, red with anger, strutted before our hero in an attitude of defiance.

"Pray be pacified!" said David.

"Pa — pa — pacified!" spluttered Carey.

"Come out with me,—pistols,—one shall fall! —Come out, Sir!"

"This is the second time I've been challenged to-day," replied David.

"I don't care for that, Sir;—seek out a friend;—I'll meet you with mine!"

"For the second time I decline fighting."

"Decline fighting!—coward!—dastard!—poltroon!" And Mr. Carey danced about with rage.

Before he had in any degree regained his composure, Captain Claverton entered the

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“What !” cried Carey, turning pale.

“And that while appearances could still be kept up, you have been anxious to marry your child to the first man who could provide for her.”

“Water ! water !” screeched Mrs. Carey.

“Do not faint, madam ; I think I can revive you,” said Claverton.

“Nay, let *me* support her ; — she has evinced quite a maternal fondness for *me*,” cried David.

“You are all in a plot against me,” exclaimed the lady, nearly pushing David down.

“Do not suppose, madam,” said Claverton, “that having heard of Mr. Carey’s impending misfortune, I have come hither meanly to insult you. My love for your daughter is unalterable ; and I am here to state that, through the unexpected liberality of an uncle, I am in a situation amply to meet *your* wishes. I have just heard from her own lips that *her* affections have never for a moment swerved from me.”

Mrs. Carey, who had cheered up a little during this address, now winked her eye, and made an odd mouth at the captain, and tried to touch his foot with hers.

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forward with pleasure to visiting you in some sweet cottage, in some *charming* neighbourhood. You must forgive poor *dear* Mr. Carey ;—as for myself, I never had a voice in the business, —*never !*"

Claverton bowed, and made no reply ; but to David he said, " I really hope that my happiness has not thrown any gloom over your prospects."

" No," replied David ; " I only yielded to what appeared to be the wishes of others."

" I believe you ; and be assured I shall be happy to meet you again."

Captain Claverton was soon seen from the windows of the hotel, walking by the side of the now happy Lavinia ; and David, thinking that his presence, after what had passed, might render her situation embarrassing, wrote her a kind and considerate farewell note ; and, without waiting either for a reply or an interview, he ordered post-horses, left Malvern that very evening, and returned to his apartments at Cheltenham, not over-pleased with his very eventful tour.

CHAPTER XVI.

LET us for once look at David in a position of at least comparative comfort. We now find him in Mr. Lorimer Lomax's private apartments, sitting at a table on which are decanters and a dessert. His glass is full, and with a steady hand he carries it to his lips. Lomax is at the head of the table; and opposite to our hero sits a man of about thirty, who has been introduced to him as the medical attendant of the host.

"Well," said Lomax, "I am glad that for once I have induced you to be communicative. I have invited my friend Galen here to meet you, because I really wish you to consult him."

"Ah," replied David, "what can he do for me?"

"I can prescribe another bumper of port," said the medical man, at the same time filling his glass, which he had but that moment emptied.

"You'll make me tipsy!" cried David.

“Better to be tipsily gay, than soberly sad,” replied Lomax.

“And after all, what have you to be seriously sad about?”

“Havn’t I told you enough?”

“No,” said the Galen. “When you are the victim of a practical joke, laugh and *pretend not to care*, and people will not trouble you again: you, however, evince just the annoyance which amuses them, and so you are the man of all others to become the butt of society.”

“I’m much obliged to you,” said David: “besides, you don’t know *all*; there’s one thing untold, which I can never tell.”

“Oh, some nonsense,” said the apothecary. “Why, if I had taken things to heart as you have done, I should have been as wretched as yourself. I’ve had my disappointments: I once expected to be a man of fashion, yet here I am at Cheltenham, with blue, red, and green bottles in my shop-window!”

“A man of fashion!” said his host: “when was that?”

“I’ll tell you when; and I’ll also tell you of a hoax which was played off upon those who well deserved it.”

“Another bottle first,” interrupted Lomax, ringing the bell; and having obtained what he

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penser of medicines in a certain country town. My master was much in repute; an irritable man, who taxed my *physical* powers to the utmost. I was up early, swept the shop, attended to prescriptions, served customers, pounded drugs, spread plasters, infused herbs, fed leeches, and balanced the books.

“It may be supposed I had not much time to spare for the acquirement of the graces: I lived in brown holland sleeves; pasted labels on phials, pill-boxes, and gallipots from morning till night, enveloping them in white paper, and directing them to the unfortunate invalids who, by their real or imaginary maladies, brought grief to my master’s mill. I wasn’t a bit like a gentleman; I never thought of pretending to be anything of the kind: my predecessor had lost his situation on account of high-heeled boots, and hat on one side, and *chainery* and *sealery* propensities. This was a warning to me, and perhaps I verged into the opposite extreme; yet, notwithstanding my threadbare condition, Mr. William Cheeks would occasionally call in to see how the shop went on without him.

“In justice to myself, I must say it went on much better than it had ever done during his connexion with the establishment. Cheeks was

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sediment at the bottom of a bottle of lotion ! Do for goodness' sake effervesce for once, and come and take a lounge with me.' But Cheeks tempted in vain ; I was constant to the laboratory until the occurrence of a great event,—an event little expected by my master and young Cheeks, still less by myself.

"Aunt Mason returned to England a rich and gay widow, without encumbrances. The doctor, having accumulated very considerable wealth, died and was buried ; and his lady, reconciled to the event by the golden accumulation, wore weeds during the voyage, and considering them literally as *sea weeds*, discarded them the day she landed. Mrs. Mason, fortunately for me, (as I then thought,) had no male relative in the world excepting myself ; and feeling, as she said, the impossibility of managing an English establishment without the assistance and protection of a gentleman, she (forgetting that by birth, parentage, and education, I had been disqualified for the performance of the part,) wrote me a letter, desiring me to meet her in London, where it was her intention to give me every possible advantage, and introduce me to the fashionable world as her nephew.

"The prospect was truly exhilarating: I.

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"In due course of time she formed a few acquaintances among the ladies with daughters, who, after visiting a watering-place for the express purpose of going into society, never allow a drawing-room to be illuminated, or a fiddle to be heard, without entering the one, and jigging to the other.

"Besides, my aunt was one of those who never lose anything for want of asking; and on the slightest introduction, or no introduction at all, she would talk of her little party, and request the pleasure of seeing you at it.

"There was one lady at Leamington who particularly attracted her attention. She was comely and well-dressed, fat, fair, and forty, or thereabouts; she had an excellent house, carriages and servants, and seemed to know nobody. 'That,' said my aunt to me, 'is evidently somebody; see how she keeps herself aloof from the tag-rag of the place: I'm determined to know her, and to have her at my house.'

"Now, when my aunt was once determined to gain a point, she never rested until by hook or by crook she succeeded: and so it was with her fancy for the fair incognita of Leamington. She looked at her earnestly until she

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made her appearance. At length we heard the approach of another carriage; a commotion took place on the stairs, the door was thrown open, and the footman announced 'Mrs. Threadneedle.' My aunt rapidly advanced to the door, and led forward her new acquaintance, who was adorned with feathers and flowers, and a short white satin dress looped up with daffodils. At the same instant a panic seemed to pervade the assembly: Mr. Décorum walked hastily to the bell, rang it violently, and when the servant appeared, ordered his wife's carriage; all the mothers and aunts cloaked and shawled their respective daughters and nieces; two most strictly particular old maids fainted dead away; and several gentlemen, after looking at each other in evident amazement, yielded to uncontrollable laughter. The less I say about the matter the better: the fact is, the interesting unknown *had no business there*; and my aunt has never since thrust her acquaintance upon a good-looking plump lady, merely because she wore fine clothes, had a good house, a smart carriage, and servants in livery.

"My aunt suddenly discovered that the air of Leamington did not at all agree with her constitution, and we made a little tour, which

in seasonable time ended at the door of the mansion in Portland Place.

"I have shown the danger of hastily forming *new* acquaintances; now I will prove that there is peril in deliberately cutting *old* ones. Everything seemed to have prospered with my aunt: a lady well known to her in India had made a splendid second marriage, and through her means we were at length visited by many leading fashionables, and had a very extensive and satisfactory acquaintance. She therefore determined to announce her first ball: the night was fixed, nothing else intervened or clashed in any way with our arrangements, and Mrs. Mason's ball really promised to be a most successful affair.

" 'And only think, aunt Mason,' said I, taking a card from the table; 'only think of my old friend Cheeks being in London!—of course you will ask him on Wednesday night.'

" 'Cheeks!' drawled my aunt; 'who is Cheeks?'

" 'I knew him when I was in the shop,' said I.

" 'Hem! what, a customer?' inquired my aunt.

" 'Oh no,' said I: 'Cheeks was my predecessor.'

“ ‘ You must cut him, then.’

“ ‘ And won’t you invite him ?’ said I.

“ ‘ Impossible !’ replied my aunt.

“ ‘ At this moment Mr. Cheeks was announced ; and in walked my old acquaintance, looking very like a mercer’s apprentice, but grasping my hand with warmth and good-humour. Mrs. Mason raised her glass, threw one glance at his person, and gathering her cashmere about her, glided from the room.

“ ‘ You are a lucky fellow, by Jove !’ said Cheeks : ‘ my eye, what a house ! But you don’t give me a proper welcome : an old friend’s hand, *when taken, should be well shaken* ; but you are like a cooling emulsion—your good fellowship has evaporated.’

“ ‘ And, pray,’ said I, ‘ what brings you to London ?’

“ ‘ Oh !’ said Cheeks, ‘ I’ve been here a long time, walking hospitals, and that sort of thing ; and now I’ve set up for myself, and drive a buggy. By the bye, *you* can do me a power of good ; introduce me at your aunt’s party on Wednesday ; say I cured either her or yourself of some hitherto incurable complaint, and my fortune is made.’

“ ‘ Cheeks,’ said I, ‘ it cannot be.’

“ ‘ No, no,’ replied Cheeks, ‘ I only, jest :

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that expostulation with my aunt would be unavailing, so, endeavouring to purge my memory of the embryo doctor, I gave myself up to anticipations of the future.

“Wednesday night came at last; and my aunt descended from her chamber in an Indian muslin garnished with beetles’ wings, a turban on her head, diamonds on her neck, bangles on her arms, and Delhi scarfs on her shoulders. Together we perambulated the already brilliantly illuminated apartments: there were the exotics, and the candelabras, and the ottomans. The supper-table was covered with every delicacy in and out of season; the china, the glass, the plate—all were unique of their kind. We had lingered too long in the temporary room; we expected to be too late to receive the first guests: but we found the ball-room still empty, and comfortably seated ourselves in solitary grandeur.

“‘That clock must be wrong,’ said my aunt.

“‘Yes,’ said I, perceiving it was very late; ‘but you know, aunt, they often put clocks wrong at balls.’

“‘True,’ replied she; and again we walked the rooms. Once or twice the servants came and fidgeted about, and cast inquiring glances towards us; but we took no notice, and again

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“My aunt started from her seat, gazed wildly round, and then fell down in a fainting-fit; and before she came to herself, she was by my direction carefully deposited in her bed, at three o'clock in the morning.

“Day began to dawn, the sun began to rise, and gradually the numerous cries of London were heard in the street. The lamps and candles were extinguished; the ices had lost their consistency, the fiddles had been deposited in their cases; Mr. Gunter was on his pillow in Berkeley Square, and Mr. Weippart and his band were gone to prepare for Lady Rigdum's *déjeûné* at Twickenham; when, yawning violently, and exhausted with agitation and disappointment, I retired to rest.

“At breakfast the mystery was explained. The house was all day long besieged by servants sent to inquire after me and my aunt, who, it appeared, had postponed her ball ‘on account of the serious indisposition of her nephew, Mr. John Purvis.’

“This was not to be credited; but I at length got possession of one of the notes which had been so strangely forwarded to every one of the guests invited by my aunt. At one glance I recognised the hand of Cheeks; and I then remembered that he must have carried off

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“Well, when we meet again, you may perhaps tell me,” said the worthy apothecary, rising; “and as I have many visits to pay, I must wish you good night. And pray, Mr. Lomax, have the goodness to give my patient the remainder of that bottle in small doses,—a wine-glass at a time, and by no means to be shaken.”

“And shall I take him to the Rotunda ball?”

“Certainly; and let him shake *himself* as much as he pleases.”

“Well, Dumps,” said Lomax when they were alone, “you are no longer your own master: let us finish the bottle, and then prepare for the ball.”

“No, no,” cried David.

“Your doctor’s orders, and I’ll see them enforced: in the first place, off with your dose.”

We beg to say that our hero was by no means intoxicated; but the combined effects of social chat and good wine had so far elevated him, that of his own free will he went to adorn himself for the ball.

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one who soon reconciled herself to all inevitable events, good, bad, or indifferent; she had inexhaustible spirits and an ever-ready laugh, which was as exhilarating as it was contagious. She was by no means a beauty, but exceedingly well-looking; a round fair face, with sparkling eyes, a mouth full of white teeth, a dimple in each cheek and one in her chin, and ringlets waving round a white forehead. It all seemed formed and put together for laughter: and then her small round figure was equally adapted for the active evolutions into which laughter always throws her votaries. It was not only at ridiculous things that she laughed,—anybody can do that,—but she could laugh off all petty annoyances, and some that were too heavy to be laughed off she contrived to lighten by a laugh.

At thirty we find her unmarried; but not because she had never loved, or been wooed by lovers:—often had her laugh exhilarated a partner; and now and then, in shady pathways, had she laughed over happy day-dreams of futurity, arm-in-arm with him who at the time she looked upon as the partner of her life. But from all her day-dreams she had been startled by awkward realities; her loves had all been nipped in the bud: yet Clara never was

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tall, handsome man, a major in the army, about forty-five years of age, well preserved and made up, padded and darkened. He seemed exceedingly taken with his laughter-loving acquaintance; danced her for half-an-hour, walked her for another half-hour, and sat her down for the rest of the evening in a corner, where, playing with her fan and looking unutterable things, he did utter a great deal of nonsense, and perfectly bewildered poor Clara, who however laughed all the time. At length she was summoned by her chaperon: the major shawled her, and shook *her* hand, and laid *his own* hand on his heart, bowing, sighing, and turning up his eyes; and having deposited her in the carriage, he leisurely listened to the last sound of her laugh, and then marched off to the Plough Hotel.

When Clara got home, she ran laughing up to her room; and whilst her maid was undressing her, she could not resist telling that a gentleman had paid her very particular attentions, and had made her an offer.

“A hoffer, Miss! Oh, my!”

“Yes,” cried Clara, laughing: “so absurd! —I pretended not to understand him; and then he asked if my papa was in the room. When I said, ‘No,’ he cried, ‘How shall I live

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"He was at the public ball last night," said the gentleman.

"Might be, sir—can't say,—so many gentlemen here:—let me see,—number 27?—no; number 27 is gone. Name begins with D. you said, sir?"

"Yes."

"D.!—let me see,—we've had plenty of D.s here."

"But you have none now?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Oh! what *am* I thinking of!—I dare say that's the gentleman you mean, sir;—Mr. Dumps, sir."

The elderly gentleman approached David.

"Your name begins with D. I'm told?"

"My name is Dumps," said David, rising.

"Thank you, sir.—Waiter, you may leave us.—My name, sir, is Titterton."

"Pray sit down, sir," said David, wondering what was coming.

"You were at the ball last night, I believe?"

"I—I believe I was, sir."

"And you danced with my daughter?"

"Your daughter, sir!"

"My name is Titterton, as I said before."

"Oh! Titterton,—Mr. Titterton;—ah! yes; Miss Titterton—I remember now—the lady who laughed."

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on his head, and scarcely knowing what he was about, walked into the high street with his unexpected visiter: as the distance is but short, and he talked all the way, the involuntary Romeo found himself under the balcony of his Juliet before he had time to collect his ideas. She, however, was not seated there, leaning "her cheek upon her hand;" so the venerable parent opened his own door with a latch key, led him in, and David, as he ascended the last stairs, heard him say,

"Well, Clara, his name began with D, sure enough. I've found your last night's partner. It is not necessary for me to introduce Mr. Dumps to you."

Clara had risen, and walked a few steps forwards; but when she saw David enter, she started back, sat down upon the sofa, and, bursting into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, exclaimed,

"Oh! but this is *too* ridiculous!"

Not a muscle of poor David's countenance moved; and as Clara, unable to speak, continued to give vent to her risibility, Mr. Titterton, looking at her with displeasure, said,

"My dear, really this is too bad! Consider Mr. Dumps's feelings!"

"I do, I do," cried Clara; "what can he

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“Marriage,” said David, fixing his eyes on the carpet.

“Oh!” cried Clara, starting up and pacing the room, “this is beyond a laughing matter;” and then, leaning her elbow on the mantelpiece, and her forehead on her hand, she seemed for some minutes lost in thought. David all the time sat as still as a mouse, and said nothing.

“There is but one thing to be done,” at length said Clara, as if soliloquising: “it is always best to come to the point, and undeceive a person at once.” And she sat down again; and looking laughingly in David’s face, she added,

“You came half unwillingly, I suspect.”

David, looking askance at her good-humoured countenance, could not help replying,

“Oh, dear me, no.”

“Indeed!” said Clara: “well, then, I’ve killed *two birds* with one *Ball*!”

“Ma’am?”

“You did not dance after you left me last night, I presume?”

“No,” said David; “I seldom dance.”

“I did,” replied Clara.

“I know it: I saw you dancing with Major Dehaney.”

“Dehaney!—oh! that was his name?”

“Yes; he was staying at the Plough, too, you know.”

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CHAPTER XVIII.

“UPON my word, Mr. Dumps, you astonish me!” said Lorimer Lomax, after David had, with a faltering voice, detailed to him the result of his introduction to Miss Titterton. “Here have I been a man about town for we won’t say how many years, and I’ve always been obliged to make love for myself;—never yet found it ready made! Love at first sight, too! Why the devil did I take such a fascinating creature to the ball with me! had I not done so, I might have been the happy man!”

“Happy, do you call it?”

“Happy! to be sure! Something to love one, something to love! can aught else be wanting to ensure the happiness of a man?”

“Pleasant to love, certainly, provided it’s reciprocal.”

“Well, you don’t dislike Miss Titterton?”

“Not at all; her laugh is so cheerful.”

“You are inclined to like her, then, and will like her.”

"But, suppose I did?"

"Why, she loves you already."

"How *can* that be on so short an acquaintance?"

"For my part," said Lomax, "I often wonder how two people can go on loving who have known each other long and thoroughly. Your intimacy is in its very bloom and freshness."

"There's something in that," replied David. "But, then, people always laugh at the idea of love at first sight."

"And I can make a jest of it too; but do not suppose I should be the less likely to avail myself of a pretty girl's spontaneous affection, were such a treasure offered to me. No, no; but, nevertheless, I'll sing you a song on the subject;" and, arranging his guitar, he sang as follows:—

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

1.

Oh, there's nought in the wide world like love at first sight,
I've said it—I've sung it—and am I not right?
Oh, yes, and I'll prove it. I happened to note
Last night on the river a beautiful boat:
A maid sat within it,—how paint what I feel?
I saw her jet ringlets—I saw her *profile*!
I knelt on the bank—I was wild with delight!
Oh! there's nought in the wide world like love at first sight.

II.

This morning I sought her,—I stated the case ;
She *rose* to receive me,—I saw her *full face* !
She look'd all the love that *one* eye can express,—
She couldn't do *more*, and she didn't do *less* ;
And, oh, when I call'd her, she limpingly came,
Just as if, little darling ! she *hadn't been lame* !
Her ringlets were false, she was four feet in height :
Oh, there's nought in the wide world like love at first sight.

“That's pretty encouragement for me,” said David when the song was over.

“Nay, it cannot apply to your case, for you have had the gift of *second sight* already. She loved last night, and had not changed her mind this morning ! A rare virtue *that* in woman !”

“True ; then you think I had better go to dinner ?”

“Go ! of course ; and tread on her toe under the table all dinner-time.”

“Don't say so,” said David.

“But, stop !” cried Lomax, “you must not go that figure. Here, Sam, take Mr. Dumps to my room, and dress him as you dress me : send for the hair-dresser, and a bouquet of moss-roses. Go, go !” added he, turning to David, who was about to expostulate ; “you have only twenty minutes ;” and he without further ceremony was hurried to Lomax's dressing-

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wretched wife might be doomed to see him hung. Shuddering at the idea, he went to bed, and dreamt that at the moment a reverend gentleman was uniting him to Miss Titterton, and tying what is called the hymeneal knot, the image of Rebecca the avenger rushed between them, transferring the noose to his neck, and hoisting him to the highest beam in the church!

But the next day David again basked in the sunshine of Clara's laugh; and though night ever brought with it harassing dreams, or waking terrors that were infinitely worse, the intimacy with the Tittertons increased, and Clara still delayed the final explanation.

David, satisfied that he was himself preferred, lost, when alone with the fair object who so favoured him, much of that awkwardness and bashful reserve which had always elsewhere obscured his good qualities. Grateful to her for a partiality which was to himself astonishing, he began to love her as he had never before loved any human being; and though always serious, and frequently abstracted, he seemed to enjoy her society.

Clara was, as we have already stated, beyond that first heyday of girlhood when a perfect Adonis alone is to become an accepted lover. She had endured many disappointments, and

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"But you are not alone to-day," said David after the usual compliments of the evening.

"Oh ! you've found that out already, have you ?" replied his laughing love. "Well, I suppose you are full of curiosity ?"

"May I ask who is below with your father ?"

"It is somebody I love very much."

"Indeed !" said her admirer.

"Yes, and somebody who loves *me* very much."

"Really !" ejaculated David.

"And reciprocity, you know, is everything."

"Is it anybody I know ?"

"Certainly not ; it is a very excellent kind old uncle of mine, who has come to Cheltenham to see us, because silly people told him there was a great deal going on which he ought to take cognizance of."

"Oh !" said David with an expression of satisfaction.

"But here he comes !" cried Clara ; and as the door opened and an elderly gentleman entered, she added, "Mr. Dumps, I must introduce you to my uncle, Mr. Mildmay."

David uttered an exclamation of surprise and sank back in his chair insensible ; for before him stood the Mr. Mildmay he had met at

Arras, and to whom he had refused to give an assurance of his innocence.

When Mr. Dumps recovered his faculties, he found himself alone with Mr. Mildmay, who was sitting opposite to him, just as he used to do at the prison at Arras, and fixing upon him the penetrating eyes which were then so much dreaded.

“It is no dream, then !” exclaimed David.

“It is indeed a painful reality,” said Mr. Mildmay. “Have you anything to communicate to me ?”

“Have you anything to ask ?”

“I need not remind you of our former meeting : all that then passed is evidently deeply impressed upon your mind.”

“I was innocent of the charge brought against me.”

“Yes ; but before you were aware of the precise nature of that charge, you refused to assert that you were innocent : you also evidently dreaded the approach of some witness, and had some crime on your conscience of which you feared the disclosure !”

David covered his face with his hands and was silent.

Mr. Mildmay again addressed him.

“When we last parted, I saw that there was

mystery about you ; but as I had no clue to your crime, whatever it might be—as I had no charge to make against you, I left you to the mercy or the justice of Providence. But now that I find you domesticated in the house of my brother-in-law, associating on terms of intimacy with my niece, I tell you frankly that I must and will investigate your character and conduct, and that your remaining one hour more here depends on your giving me a full explanation.”

“ To-morrow,” said the man of mystery—
“ perhaps—to-morrow.”

“ Be it so,” replied Mr. Mildmay, rising ;
“ and I trust your detail will be so satisfactory that we shall for ever after be friends.”

David prepared to depart, for Mr. Mildmay had already rung the bell as a hint that his absence was expected ; but at its sound Clara entered the room and advanced towards her admirer, holding out her hand. There was no laugh upon her features ; indeed her eyes looked as if she had been crying.

“ You are going,” said she : “ shake hands with me, and let it be a token on my part that I believe you innocent, and on yours that you appreciate my good opinion and will prove yourself worthy of it. Come, do not be cast

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though she occasionally laughed at his dilemma, acknowledged with a sigh that there was something very suspicious about his dread that *something* would be discovered, and that *somebody* would bear witness against him.

"Who, in the name of goodness, could Rebecca be, I wonder!" said Clara; "Rebecca the avenger!"

"It is quite impossible for me to guess; and as you must remain equally in the dark until to-morrow, let me light your candle for you, and wish you good-night."

"But where is papa?"

"Gone to bed: you know," said Mr. Mildmay, "he always goes to bed when there's anything disagreeable going on in the house."

"True," said Clara, laughing; "I forgot that. Do you know, I think it's a very good plan. Good-night," she added, kissing him.

"Good-night! and may we be happy to-morrow!"

The uncle and niece then separated.

But many hours elapsed ere the light was extinguished in Clara's room. What could he have done! Again and again she asked herself the question, but without arriving one atom nearer the solution of the mystery. He was not the sort of man to do a rash and de-

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face of his in a night-cap, and he ejaculating my name in the ravings of fever. For God's sake, go, dearest uncle," she added earnestly, "and come back and tell me the worst."

Mr. Mildmay could not refuse to comply with her wishes; he walked to the Plough hotel, and on inquiring for Mr. Dumps, was informed by the waiter that he had left Cheltenham by the London mail the night before!

"Gone!" said Mr. Mildmay; "and did he leave no letter, no message?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"The unprincipled scoundrel!" said Mr Mildmay, and walked back to make known the result of his inquiry.

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had shot a fellow-creature in solitary single combat, contrary to all law, without seconds or witnesses of any kind. There were, indeed, two witnesses that such a crime had been committed by him ; was it not, then, wiser and better to deliver himself up to justice at once, rather than go on for ever trembling at shadows ?

The people at David's lodgings did not profess to cook for him, and about six o'clock, feeling exceedingly hungry, he wandered forth in search of a dinner. Poor human nature !—thus it is ! We talk of all-consuming sorrow, devouring grief, gnawing pains, and anguish that cuts into our very vitals ; and then we take a long breath, wipe our eyes, sit down to table, unfold our napkin, take the carving-knife and fork, pick and choose the choice little bits that please us best, sip sherry, take one glass of port, and finish with a bottle of claret. Then, unless we have overdone it, and eat too much, we feel a great deal better, and don't have a relapse until next morning.

David, in the midst of his sorrows, which for the last hour had been considerably aggravated by hunger, went to a well-known dining-house, called the Albion Hotel, situated close to Drury-lane theatre. In the large coffee-room, which

still, after the fashion of the olden time, is divided into boxes, may be found men of all grades and professions ; and there, in the box immediately opposite to the stove, David encountered his old acquaintance Captain Kilkenny.

It was not likely that Kilkenny ever could forget one of the heroes of the Boulogne tragedy, especially as he had visited him on the part of Mr. O'Flaney respecting his farcical feat of the previous night, and had also borne him from the scene of bloodshed, and seen him safe on board the Water-wag-tail. He recognised him the moment he entered, hailed him unceremoniously, and made him enter his box and join him in the repast which was preparing.

"And how many men have you murdered since we last met?" said Kilkenny in a tone of voice calculated to startle the peaceable inmates of the coffee-room, and to make David anticipate the speedy entrance of the officers of justice.

"Hush, for goodness' sake!" said David. "I have as yet escaped detection."

"Dear me! I of course thought you had been hung long ago!" cried his tormentor, laughing, and in as loud a key as before.

"But now, pray, do be serious, and, above all, speak low. When you left me, what happened on your return to—to—"

"To the scene of blood," whispered Kilkenny.

"Pray, be serious, and relieve my mind. You found——?"

"Nothing!" said Kilkenny with mock solemnity.

"Nothing!"

"Nothing,—and, what was more strange, no *body*! The ground was much saturated with blood——"

David groaned.

"But the corpse had disappeared!"

"And what did you do?" gasped David.

"Why," replied Kilkenny, "I thought, unless I was questioned, the wisest thing was to say nothing about it. I heard a great deal about the mysterious disappearance of that fellow,—what was his name?"

"Arden,—Mr. George Arden."

"Yes, yes, Arden,—for he was in debt all over the town. But, as you may well suppose, taking into consideration the last glimpse you had of him, he never walked back into Boulogne to pay his bills. Having rather in a hur-

men way paid the last debt of nature, I suppose he considered that all the other little items were cancelled."

"And Miss Tatum?"

"Was the devil's Miss Tatum?"

"Why," said David, "the young lady in *hats*."

"Oh, I know,—spectator of the fight. Like myself, she seemed to wish to keep her own counsel, for next day, when I met her walking with a hobbling old man——"

"Her father."

"Very probable,—she looked me full in the face with a sort of *never-saw-you-before* expression."

"And what did you say?"

"Nothing."

"Then you don't know what became of the body?"

"No;—unless, indeed, Miss Tatum dragged it to the edge of the cliffs, and threw it into the sea."

"You don't mean *that*?"

"Well, then, I suppose some friend or relative smuggled it off to Calais, embalmed him, and embarked him, and went with him to Dover."

"Perhaps," said David, "he did not die immediately."

“If so, it is the more probable that he was carried off to Calais, there to breathe his last; for, after the fearful effusion of blood we witnessed, recovery was not to be thought of.”

“You think not?” said David, his last lingering hope departing.

“Think not! I’m sure of it.—But here comes our dinner, and also my old friend Commodore Cockle, who promised to meet me here, and is always punctual as clockwork. Here, Cockle,—I need not introduce this gentleman, Mr. Dumps, he you smuggled off from Boulogne, that day that you cheated the hangman of his due.”

“Pray, don’t talk so loud,” said David, at the same time shaking hands with Mr. Cockle, who received him cordially, notwithstanding Kilkenny’s remarks.

“Hush, you silly fellow!” said he; “they don’t hang in France.”

“No!” said Kilkenny. “Well, well, that accounts for our having Mr. Dumps’s company to-day.”

“But, by the bye,” exclaimed Cockle, “Lomax wrote me word two or three months ago that you were in Cheltenham.”

“I *was* there,” replied David.

"But since that, he wrote again, and told me an awkward story,—some like scrape that you were involved in."

"Oh ho!" cried Kilkenny; "another awkward story."

"What did he say?" inquired David.

"Faith, I hardly know;—something about love at first sight; ending in desertion of the lady; and, moreover, a rumour that a certain uncle knew more of your past conduct than was quite convenient."

"By Heaven!" said David, "it seems my fate always to excite suspicion; but I assure you on my honour that I am innocent."

"What did you say?" interrupted Kilkenny with a very peculiar expression of countenance.

"I say that my intentions have never been bad; and when involved in equivocal situations, it has been through no intentional error of my own."

"Will you excuse me for saying that it appears to me there has been always a want of frankness and candour about you?" said Mr. Cockle. "Perhaps you wanted courage to state the facts as they occurred; but, at all events, I suspect that to no one human being have you ever yet told the truth."

“ Oh !” cried Kilkenny, laughing heartily, “ that beats all I said to him about hanging.”

“ Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Dumps,” continued Cockle seriously. “ I do not mean that the vice of lying is habitual to you : I merely say that, having an awkward story to tell about yourself, you never frankly and honestly told it ; and therefore, having been driven to concealment and equivocation, you have made matters worse, and continually involved yourself in mystery.”

“ Why, that is very like what you used to say of me,” said Kilkenny.

“ Very true,” replied Cockle ; “ and now, our filberts and port and sherry being on the table, I have a great mind to tell Mr. Dumps a story for his future edification.

“ It was at a public school that I first became acquainted with my friend Bob. He was then a little round-faced curly-pated boy, about ten years of age ; and I being two years his senior, and there existing some intimacy between our parents, he was put under my protection.

“ Bob had been a spoiled child, and until his tenth year the world had been to him a world of pies and tarts, of comfits and comforts. His *will* had been the regulator of the

paternal mansion, and his pleasure the main object promoted by his mother. All this ended (that is, as far as the young gentleman's residence at home was concerned) in those roots of all evil, idleness and ignorance : and some rash and glaring acts of insubordination having brought upon Bob's head the wrath of his father, (*whose head, by the by, was more in error than his son's,*) the young reprobate had sudden notice to quit, and, in spite of the threats, entreaties, and hysterics of his mother, he was immediately borne off to the academic shades superintended by the Reverend Doctor Rearpepper.

" I soon, fool that I was ! became very fond of Bob. We naturally get attached to those who cling to us for support ; and everything was so new to him, poor fellow ! that without me he was miserable.

" At that very early age, Bob had acquired a taste for extravagance ; his money always burnt a hole in his little breeches pocket ; and when it was gone, many a shilling did he borrow of me, and many more did he owe to Mrs. Puffy, the fat vender of pastry, whose residence was ' down the street.'

" These premature extravagances, petty as they certainly were, of course led to little dif-

ficulties : and perhaps the worst result likely to arise from early embarrassments is, the habit of fibbing, and making a mystery and concealment of troubles which nothing but candour could really remedy. And thus it was with Bob : had I not loved him and been a real friend, he would have forfeited my friendship a hundred times ; so often did he borrow, so often did he promise repayment, and so often did he forget to fulfil the promises he voluntarily made. But no, I wrong him—he did *not* forget ; I always saw that he felt infinitely more annoyed than I did when he stood before me a defaulter, and his flushed cheek and moistened eyes proved that he endured humiliation, and that he, *at heart*, was even then *my honourable friend*.

“ Are there sweets in jam pies that can atone for subsequent humiliations like these ? I should have thought not ; but poor Bob still *ran down the street*, and *outran* his pocket-money !

“ At sixteen I left Doctor Rearpepper’s establishment ; and many were the tears that poor Bob shed at my departure. He said nothing at all about the nine shillings and fourpence halfpenny that he owed me ; but when I said, ‘ Bob, be sure you write to me,’

I suspect that he almost expected me to add, 'and don't forget to enclose the money.'

"During my residence at Oxford we never met. At first our interchange of letters was frequent, and the style of our communications most affectionate; but gradually our correspondence flagged, and for a whole year I heard nothing of him. At length, by the coach came a splendidly bound copy of a work which he knew to be my favourite; and in the title-page was written my name, and underneath the words, 'From his affectionate and grateful friend Bob.'

" 'Yes,' thought I as I read the inscription, 'and still thou art my honourable friend !'

"Bob, after so long a period had elapsed, was naturally ashamed to send me the few shillings that he owed me; but he could not be happy till he had spent many pounds on a gift which was intended to repay me. With the parcel I received a letter announcing his having entered the army, and adding that he was about to join his regiment, which was then on a foreign station. He entreated me not to suppose from his long silence that he had forgotten me; and, in short, there was so much warmth of heart about the whole letter, that Bob was reinstated in my good graces,

and I wrote him a most affectionate reply, assuring him that whenever we met he would find me unaltered.

“ After quitting Oxford, I travelled on the Continent for many months ; and on my return to England, I found my friend Bob at an hotel in Bond Street, and, in every sense of the words, ‘ a gay man about town.’

“ Ours was more like the reunion of boys after a summer’s vacation, than the meeting of men who had seen something of the world. We could talk only of the past, of frolic and of fun ; and, while arm-in-arm we ranged the streets of the west end, we laughed almost as much, and were really nearly as thoughtless, as in the days when together we ranged the play-ground of old Rearpepper.

“ Whatever *I* may have been, Bob was indeed unchanged ; and not alone in spirits and temper, for I soon found that his old habits had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. He still retained his ‘ sweet tooth,’ and daily did he lead me into Gunter’s or Grange’s, (nay, often into both in turn,) and there I saw him indulge as he used of old in the habitation of Mrs. Puffy ;—the only difference was, that his dainties were somewhat more refined, and more expensive ; for,

alas ! I soon saw that the old injunction, ' Put it down to my bill,' had by no means fallen into disuse. All other tradespeople were most impartially *dealt with* by Bob in the same way : and I saw him take possession of trinkets, coats, hats, and boots, without considering it requisite to take his purse out of his pocket.

" Now I knew that Bob would eventually, in all probability, be exceedingly well off ; but I greatly doubted his having it *then* in his power to pay for one fourth of the valuable articles which I saw him so unceremoniously take possession of. I one day ventured to speak to him on the subject ; and from his embarrassed manner, and the deepened colour on his cheek, I saw that he felt the truth of what I said : but I soon found that with the old error, he still retained the old habit of fibbing to endeavour to conceal it ; and the consequence was, that we spent our evening together with much more reserve than usual.

" The next morning I forgot all that had passed ; for Bob ran to my bedside to inform me that he was ordered to India, and must leave London in a day or two. He showed me his letters, and it was evident that he must prepare for his immediate departure.

" We breakfasted together ; and during the

repast, the waiter was continually presenting him with wafered notes; and it appeared that several persons had called, very earnestly wishing to see him. I had my suspicions about these visitations, but said nothing.

“Immediately after breakfast, Bob took my arm and requested me to walk with him; and after passing through several streets and squares in unusual silence, and with an appearance of agitation in his manner, he suddenly addressed me.

“‘There is no alternative,’ said he; ‘I must go.’

“‘You must indeed, Bob,’ I replied,—‘unless you are *detained*.’

“‘Detained!’ said Bob, blushing; ‘how do you mean?’

“‘Pardon me,’ I answered, ‘but really few young men could go on as you have lately done, and be prepared for a departure so sudden. Now, my dear Bob, you know what my finances are; you know I have literally *nothing* to spare: but if, knowing this, you think I can be of temporary use to you, command me.’

“Bob grasped my arm, and his eyes watered; but he was ashamed to own the extent of his encumbrances, and therefore hastily answered,

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“ ‘ Umph !’ said I ; ‘ the owner, I suppose, is rich.’

“ ‘ He has an only daughter,’ said Bob.

“ ‘ Has he ?’ I answered.

“ ‘ His sole heiress,’ added Bob.

“ ‘ What then ?’ I replied.

“ ‘ I am ashamed of having concealed all this so long from so dear a friend,’ murmured Bob.

“ ‘ All what ?’

“ ‘ But the secret was not my own.’

“ ‘ What secret ?’

“ ‘ That lovely girl !’

“ ‘ Upon my word, Bob,’ I cried, ‘ you put me out of all patience !’

“ ‘ I have won that girl’s affections.’

“ ‘ The heiress ?’ said I.

“ ‘ She loves me,’ whispered Bob.

“ ‘ My dear fellow,’ I exclaimed, ‘ this is news indeed !—you have no occasion of assistance from a poor fellow like *me*.’

“ ‘ Oh !’ said Bob, ‘ you have not heard all. She loves me to madness, poor dear girl ! But, rich as her father is, were *he* to suppose that I am involved, he would forbid the match.’

“ ‘ A very sensible old man.’

“ ‘ That may be ; but there is another obstacle—my rank : Clara will not consent to marry anything below a captain.’

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out over the square!—But come, we'll talk all that over while we are at dinner.'

"Before the meal was half finished, Bob seemed quite to have recovered his spirits; and I could not help suspecting, that as the prospect of an immediate separation did not seem to depress him, he loved the lady less than he loved her gold.

" 'Is she pretty?' said I after a long pause, during which *I* at least had been thinking of her.

" 'Who?' said Bob, starting.

" 'I say, is the lady pretty?'

" 'What lady?' said Bob.

" 'Why, your love, to be sure.'

" 'Which do you mean?'

" 'Nonsense, Bob!—I mean the girl you are attached to;—why, man, she who lives in Portman Square.'

" 'Oh! what *was* I dreaming of!—*very* pretty.'

" 'I can't imagine, Bob,' said I, 'when you contrived to win your divinity: you and I have been for months almost inseparable, and——'

" 'Ask no questions,' said Bob: 'the secret is not my own.'

" 'Not entirely, certainly,' I replied. 'Is she to inherit the house in Portman Square?'

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that after he went, many untoward circumstances occurred which, having first materially lowered my resources, next effectually lowered my spirits, and I used to saunter through our old haunts looking like the ghost of his companion.

“ When he was gone, I became acquainted with many circumstances connected with his expenditure which perfectly astounded me ; and at the end of four months, (exactly two months before it was to become due,) I had every reason to doubt whether the draft for one hundred and ninety pounds would ever be paid.

“ I was conscious of my own utter inability to pay it ; and I therefore existed for a week or two in a state of mental excitement not to be described. One day after breakfast, I sallied forth more dolorous than usual ; and after wandering about for some time, I found myself in Portman Square, opposite the identical mansion inhabited by Bob’s intended.

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ thought I, ‘ were Bob now in possession of that house all would go well with us : —his heart is in the right place, poor fellow ! But, alas ! before he puts me in possession of that sky-blue apartment, with the hot water and the cold, and the *eau-de-Cologne*, I may be in prison, and my name disgraced ! ’

"As I went towards the balcony of the morning-room, I saw a female wearing some garments, and, suddenly turning her head towards me, she seemed to recognise my person, and gave me a familiar nod.

"I soon discovered it was my old friend and near neighbour Mrs. Symmons; and, beckoning me to the window, she exclaimed,

"How I'm delighted to see you!—we only came to town yesterday,—we are on a visit to Mr. Molesworth; pass over in, and I'll introduce you.

"I knocked at the hall-door in a state of mind not to be described,—the hall-door of a house in which I (by anticipation) already possessed a room of my own, with sky-blue curtains, and a new-invented spring sofa bath overflowing with eau-de-cologne! I walked up stairs; and my friend Mrs. Symmons introduced me to Mr. Molesworth (an old gentleman in a pair of gouty shoes), his daughter Miss Molesworth (a lovely, fair-haired girl of about eighteen), her sister Flora (still in a pinafore, and not come out), and her two little brothers (school-boys in round jackets and duck trousers.)

"‘Dear me!’ thought I, ‘how poor dear Bob was mistaken in supposing her an heiress!’

"In this family I spent many happy days;

and being, though unknown to her, so well acquainted with the secret of the young lady's heart, I became more intimate with her than I could have been with any one else, without incurring the imputation of 'serious intentions.' In this instance, however, my knowledge of the fair lady's engagement to another person (and that person my friend) made me feel perfectly at my ease; and we became the talk of all our acquaintances, without my being the least aware that we were engaged even in a little flirtation.

"To my utter astonishment, Mrs. Symmons came to me one day, (it was the day before that on which Bob's draft was to become due,) and, with a knowing look, asked me why I was so out of spirits? I gave an evasive reply, for I did not choose to own the paltry pecuniary difficulty which was threatening to overpower me.

" 'Nonsense!' said Mrs. Symmons; 'go boldly, and make your offer: your connexions are unexceptionable; and whatever your present income may be, your prospects are excellent. Besides, *she* has enough for both; for, though not an only child, her father can afford to give her a very excellent fortune.'

" 'And pray,' I replied, 'of what lady are you talking?'

“ ‘Miss Molesworth, to be sure; — I know she is attached to you.’

“ ‘You know nothing about the matter,’ said I, ‘for I can tell you that——’

“ ‘I hesitated, for I had no right to betray Bob’s secret.

“ ‘Well,’ said Mrs. Symmons, ‘here she comes, and I will leave you together;’ and away she went.

“ ‘What is the matter?’ said Miss Molesworth earnestly as she entered; ‘you seem agitated — what has happened?’

“ ‘Are we alone?’ said I after a pause. ‘It is better that I should be explicit.’

“ ‘Miss Molesworth started, coloured, and cast down her eyes. Had I been a favoured lover on the point of making an avowal of attachment, she could not have been more embarrassed.

“ ‘Do not be alarmed,’ said I: ‘I know all!’

“ ‘Sir!’ said Miss Molesworth.

“ ‘I am Bob’s best friend, and I know your secret.’

“ ‘My secret!’ she exclaimed.

“ ‘Yes, dear lady,’ I answered: ‘I am, as I told you before, the most intimate friend of Bob.’

“ ‘Of Bob!’ said she.

“ ‘ Yes,’ I replied, taking her hand ; ‘ I am Bob’s schoolfellow.’

“ ‘ And pray, sir,’ said she, withdrawing her hand, ‘ who is Bob?’

“ ‘ Do not distress yourself,’ I whispered ; ‘ do not think it necessary to conceal anything from me ;—before he left England, Bob told me all.’

“ ‘ All *what*?’ cried Miss Molesworth.

“ ‘ Your mutual attachment,—your engagement,’ I replied.

“ Miss Molesworth started up, colouring crimson. At first she could not articulate, but at last she said,

“ ‘ I know not, sir, to what I am to attribute this conduct : I have been attached to *no one*, engaged to *no one*,—I know not of whom you speak. I had considered you, sir, in the light of a friend ; but now, sir, now——’

“ She could say no more, but sank on a chair beside me in a flood of tears.

“ A mist at that moment fell from my eyes ; I saw at once the full extent of Bob’s unpardonable falsehood, and the distressing certainty flashed upon my mind that his draft would be dishonoured.

“ Mrs. Symmons entered at the moment, and found us both apparently plunged into the

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“So far I had wronged my honourable friend; and I was therefore able to appear in Portman Square in excellent spirits.

“‘The course of’ my ‘true love’ did, for a wonder, ‘run smooth,’ and, all our preliminaries having been finally arranged, the Molesworths left town for the family seat in Wiltshire, and I remained to arrange some legal and other matters, which would in all probability detain me for a couple of months. I was sitting in my own room rather out of spirits the morning after my true love’s departure, when the door opened, and in came—Bob! He was so evidently delighted to see me again, that I could not help receiving him kindly. He spoke of the obligation I had conferred on him previous to his departure; and after frankly acknowledging the gratification I had felt at his punctuality, I said,

“‘But how is this? returned after so short an absence!’

“‘Oh! we are not to go to India, after all; I’ve been no further than Madeira;—we’ll talk that all over another time. I suppose I shall be sent to the West, instead of the East.’

“‘I only regret it on account of your rank; it may retard your marriage.’

“‘*My marriage!*’ said Bob, blushing all over.

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lecting his prompt payment of the hundred and ninety pounds, I made myself responsible for the amount of the bill, and then returned to congratulate my friend.

“ When I told him what I had done, he started up and exclaimed, ‘ You do not mean it !—you cannot have made yourself responsible for the amount of that fellow’s bill !’

“ ‘ I have, I assure you,’ said I.

“ ‘ Then,’ said Bob, ‘ *you* will have to pay it ; I shall not have the money myself ; I never asked you to incur the responsibility,—I never expected it,—and I repeat that you will have to pay it.’

“ ‘ My dear Bob,’ said I, ‘ it will not be in my power ; I am peculiarly situated. At the end of a month I shall be most particularly engaged—my hands, as it were, will be *tied*, and paying this at that particular period will be out of the question.’

“ Still Bob persisted that he never asked me to become responsible, and it ended in his leaving me in a very ill humour. My engagements with legal persons employed me for days together in the City, and I saw very little of Bob. When we did meet, my manner was cold and constrained ; and it was not till within a day or two of the expiration of the month that I

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“ ‘ Oh ! a secret !’

“ ‘ Yes ; and the secret has not been *entirely* my own.’

“ ‘ Indeed !’ said Bob.

“ ‘ But I will *now* conceal nothing from you : you, I remember, before you went away, confided *your* secret to *me*.’

“ ‘ Oh !—ah !—hem—yes—well ?’ stammered Bob.

“ ‘ I am going to be married to-morrow.’

“ ‘ Married !’ exclaimed Bob : ‘ tell me all about it ; who is she,—do *I* know her ?’

“ ‘ You do *not* know her ; but I have heard you *speak of her*.’

“ ‘ Indeed ! Where does she live ?—is she pretty ?—is she rich ?’

“ ‘ There is no time,’ said I, ‘ to answer your questions at present : I dine with the family at six, and I mean to take you with me. Go and dress, and in half an hour I will call for you in a carriage.’

“ ‘ Where does your intended live ?’ said Bob as we drove along Oxford Street and turned into Orchard Street.

“ ‘ Time will show,’ I replied.

“ ‘ Where are we now ?’ said Bob as the carriage made a sudden turn.

“ ‘ We are in Portman Square,’ I replied.

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“ ‘Go in!’ said I; ‘to be sure: and you will meet old friends, and show me where you used to meet the lady of your love, and——’

“ ‘You are going too far!’ whispered Bob: ‘I see my error; I uttered what was false—forgive me—I am cured. But these servants and the inmates of the house will think us mad!’

“ ‘Not at all,’ I replied. ‘Speak the truth in future, as I have done to you.’

“ I pressed his hand and led him up stairs. I saw that he was depressed and humiliated; and when we got to the drawing-room door, he whispered,

“ ‘And do *they* know it? I cannot face them.’

“ ‘They know *nothing*,’ I replied, ‘and shall never know from me anything discreditable to my honourable friend Bob.’

“ ‘I will never utter a falsehood again,’ said Bob. And I firmly believe he adhered to his resolution.”

“ He was rightly served,” said David.

“ I thought you would say so.”

“ Well, but how does this story apply to *me*? I never invented falsehoods to cover my embarrassments.”

“ No,” said Cockle, “ perhaps not; but you

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“Very true,” said Kilkenny; “but then, you know, he of course did not introduce him as *Mr. Bob*.”

“Oh no; that did not occur to me,” replied David, “and Mr. Cockle did not mention his other name to me.”

“Do you not know *my* Christian name?” inquired Kilkenny.

“No;—I never heard it that I am aware of.”

“Well, then, to throw more light on Cockle’s story, and bring its moral more home, let me tell you that *my* Christian name is Robert, and that ever since we were schoolboys Cockle has called *me* Bob.”

“*You!*” said Dumps.

“Yes. I trust I am reformed; and I tell *you*, as I have already told Mrs. Cockle, that *I* am the hero of his story. Some weeks after they were married we met again, and then she heard him for the first time address me as Bob. I saw her start, and blush, and look inquiringly at her husband; and, to put an end to all mystery, I put a bold face on the matter, and had the impudence to tell the whole story!”

“You don’t say so!” said David.

“Yes,” said Mr. Cockle; “and now I am sure that my wife esteems my honourable friend Bob almost as much as I do ”

"And now," exclaimed Kilkenny, shaking Mr. Dumps on the shoulder in a way made him start, "why will not you show courage, and tell us all the particulars of the story?"

"It is very late," said David: "to-morrow——"

"To-morrow be it, then. At the same time we will dine here again." And the trio being separated, David returned rather lightened of spirit to his second floor in Arundel-street.

CHAPTER XX.

CLARA TITTERTON might well say that there seemed to be a fatality against the realisation of any of her visions of love and happiness. It is not to be supposed that a girl of her good sense could seriously lament the disappearance of Major Dehaney, a man she had met but once, and who at that interview had poured forth his addresses in a state of semi-inebriation. She laughed at herself for her folly in having for one moment allowed such protestations to impose upon her ; but no one was aware of her momentary infatuation, therefore no one laughed at her when he so unceremoniously departed.

But Mr. Dumps's equally unexpected flight was a very different affair. His attentions had been seen by her friends and acquaintances for many weeks ; and his voluntary desertion caused many rumours, some prejudicial to his own character, some derogatory to poor Clara, and all as far removed from the plain truth as possible.

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diately before his meeting with Mr. Mildmay at Arras.

“So far we have succeeded in putting together two links of the chain. It is clear that he must have left Boulogne in haste, and that he was anxious to be conveyed elsewhere as speedily as possible. Boulogne, then, was in all probability the scene of his misdeeds, whatever they may have been.”

“I think I know one person who could throw some light on the mystery,” replied Lomax,—“an intimate friend of my cousin, at whose request we received him on board the yacht; but he may be bound in honour not to reveal what he knows.”

“Will you ask him?”

“I will write by this day’s post to Mr. Cockle, requesting him to make the inquiry. I trust Miss Titterton does not let this unpleasant affair prey on her health and spirits.”

“Why, fortunately,” replied Mr. Mildmay, “she is not one who is easily cast down. I have already seen her laugh at this adventure; but it was a laugh that, I suspect, was assumed to cover disappointment and wounded pride. However, she has agreed to accompany her father and myself to dine with some old friends who are just arrived here; and I trust, having

once got her out, she will recover her cheerfulness."

Clara's uncle cordially thanked Lomax for the kindness and consideration with which he had received him; and Lomax, much pleased with the old gentleman, and interested about his niece, was agreeably surprised, when he went out to dinner, to find that the Cambray party and himself had been invited to dine at the same house.

Poor Clara, conscious of the gossip which she had so innocently excited, was nervous and flushed; but the party was a very small one, the host and hostess, (two much-valued friends,) her father and uncle, and Mr. Lomax. Her female friend, though just arrived at Cheltenham, had already heard that something very annoying had happened, and observing that during dinner she talked and laughed with an evident effort to conceal her mortification, she gave her the signal for departure much earlier than usual, and taking Clara's hand affectionately led her to the drawing-room.

"And now," said she, seating Clara in an arm-chair, and taking a low stool by her side, "do tell me, my dear girl, what is all this nonsense which I have heard about you and some false swain?"

“ Oh !” said Clara, laughing, “ so well does it deserve the name of nonsense, that it is not worth talking about.”

“ I should agree with you there, Clary, did I not see that you are hurt and annoyed.”

“ Well,” said Clara, “ I will own that it *was* mortifying — and so ridiculous !”

“ Now don’t laugh, but seriously tell me about it.”

“ I have nothing to tell but what I dare say you have already heard.”

“ I have only heard that some person, whom everybody wonders you *could* like, paid you marked attention, proposed for you, and then packed up his trunk and ran away.”

“ True, quite true,” replied Clara, laughing ; “ without even leaving ‘ P. P. C.’ at my father’s door !”

“ Can you account for his conduct in any way ?”

“ No ;—I certainly often thought that he had something weighing on his mind.”

“ I ’ll be bound he was a married man !”

“ Oh, no,” said Clara ; “ I don’t think that.”

“ What *could* it be, then ?” said her friend.

“ Indeed,” replied Clara, “ nobody can be more in the dark than myself.”

“ Did you know his family ?”

“ No ; indeed I believe he had no relatives living.”

“ But his origin—what was it ?”

“ Oh, nothing very great, I believe.”

“ His fortune ?”

“ My father seemed satisfied with his representations.”

“ Well ; and you knew where he came from, I suppose ?”

“ Why, not exactly ; — he had been travelling, and I do not think he had any settled home.”

“ No settled home ! — vagabondising from watering-place to watering-place !—you should be more careful, Clara, with whom you get acquainted.—Who introduced you ?”

“ The Master of the Ceremonies.”

“ Well ; but his name — you *do* know *that*, I presume ?”

“ Oh !” cried Clara, laughing ; “ and *such* a name !”

“ Well, what is it ?”

“ Dumps !” replied Clara, her risibility increasing.

“ Dumps !” said her friend ; “ what an odd name !—surely I have heard that name before : good gracious ! it just occurs to me where.”

“ Perhaps you knew him, then ?”

“ His Christian name ? — make haste, tell me ! ”

“ David ;—not at all a nice name ! ”

“ Oh ! ” cried her friend, “ it is the very man !—the reprobate ! the abandoned wretch ! ”

“ You *have* met him, then ? ” said Clara ;—
“ where ? ”

“ At Boulogne. ”

“ Explain—— ”

“ I will ;—I almost faint at the recollection ! My husband dined out—I retired early to bed—I fell asleep—I was suddenly roused—— ”

“ By what ? ” exclaimed Clara.

“ This very Mr. Dumps, who, with his nightcap on his head, was sitting up by my side in my bed ! ”

“ Oh, this is too much ! ” said Clara, who, leaning back in her chair, actually laughed herself into strong hysterics. Lady O’Flaney rang the bell ; and having partially restored her friend, she sent to request the presence of the gentlemen, as she had something of importance to communicate.

“ Here we have another link to the chain when we least expected it ! ” exclaimed Mr. Mildmay, when he had heard of his extraordinary invasion of the dormitory of her ladyship.

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“Surely,” whispered Lomax to O’Flaney, “the law in France, as elsewhere, must be, that there cannot be a conviction for murder unless a body is found?”

“I suppose so,” replied O’Flaney in the same low tone; “but before I left Boulogne, I perfectly recollect an old lady’s hinting, at an *écarté* party in the Grande Rue, that David Dumps was a cannibal, and *had eaten the body!*”

For so worthless a being as Mr. Dumps was represented to be, it is not to be supposed that a girl like Clara Titterton should long mourn. She could not, it is true, bring herself at once to credit all the allegations brought against him. But what could she say in his behalf? That he had deserted her was but too evident; and his former reserve and depression of spirits served very strongly to corroborate the worst accusations now brought against him. It was poor Clara’s fate to veil her feelings under smiles; and she again appeared in public, and again endeavoured to laugh off the scrutiny and the pity of the vulgar.

Mr. Lorimer Lomax felt much interested for the little lady of Cambray, and availing himself of the introduction which had taken place, he sometimes called to inquire for her, often joined her and her uncle in their walks, and now and

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Others gaze with raptured eyes
On the roses fresh and fair ;
But more dearly do I prize
Faded flowers I've seen thee wear.
All thy songs return unsought ;
By thy voice I'm haunted yet !
Oh ! when thou canst banish thought,
And then only, say—" Forget."

This was Clara's favourite ballad ; a melancholy one, certainly. But why was it her favourite ? " Though with ease thou sayst ' Forget,' "—*that* might apply to David. The deserter might be supposed to wish that the deserted would in time forget him ; and it was natural for the young lady who had sanctioned his addresses to remark, " Oh ! how hard the task for me !" But there were other lines totally inapplicable to poor David : " All thy songs return unsought, — By thy voice I'm haunted yet !" What could this mean ? *He* in all his born days never could sing a note ; and as for his voice, Clara could not pretend to say that it haunted her.

Then, again, " prizing,"—" Faded flowers I've seen thee wear !" and *preferring* them to " roses fresh and fair !" Was it possible that she had ever picked up a pink that David had worn in his button-hole, and then apostro-

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though the very last of the autumnal leaves were now falling from the trees in the Well-walks, he would linger under a certain balcony, (this was the *on dit*,) warbling pretty little melodies to a certain pretty little lady.

We believe that there is some old song (not one of Mr. Lorimer Lomax's favourites) which begins,

“ Youth 's the time for love and joy.”

Now, if this means that youth is the season for most bewildering and lasting attachments, we beg leave to say it is no such thing. A youth loves “ to distraction,” as the saying is, he does very foolish things, he attempts in every possible way to insinuate himself into the good graces of the girl, and then wins the suffrages of, or else bids defiance to, fathers, mothers, brothers, uncles, aunts, or guardians : he loves ! oh ! how he loves ! but “ he loves and he rides away !”—a difficulty, a doubt, a jealous whim, or a feeling of satiety ; we cannot say the cause, we only know that so it is ; and he goes to another place, and sees another lady, and does the love all over again, and talks of his former love, or what he once falsely imagined was love, as a mere chimera, a mistake ! But now he loves as never man yet loved, and he persists in it till another change comes o'er the spirit of his dream.

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CHAPTER XXI.

WE left David, two chapters (*and three weeks*) ago, parting with his friends Cockle and Kilkenny at the Albion Hotel, and promising to meet them at the same hour in the same place the next day, to tell his sad eventful history.

The three gentlemen were punctual; and when the cloth was removed, David solemnly revealed all the reader already knows of his adventures at Boulogne.

“And you have been in the secret?” said Cockle to the captain.

“When I asked you to take him on board your yacht, I told you he had pressing reasons for wishing to fly the French coast.”

“Ay, but, hang it! I never dreamt of murder!—I beg your pardon, Mr. Dumps.”

“Oh, don’t mind me, — I’m used to it. Nothing you or anybody else can say is worse than my own thoughts.”

“But, Bob!” exclaimed Cockle, “when

you got back to the town, did you tell anybody?"

"Not I: why should I mix myself up with so bad a story? I heard a great many rumours and surmises, most of which I knew to be false: one thing, however, I could not deny—a quantity of blood was seen on the ground where that poor fellow fell."

"Oh!" groaned David.

"And as no corpse was to be found——"

"Well?" inquired David.

"—And as the murderer was also missing——"

"Yes?"

"—It was conjectured that Mr. Dumps had first killed his man, and had then carried him away. But it seems, from your own account, that the fight was forced upon you?"

"Forced upon me, sir! to be sure it was. I was not the man to go out killing people, with the chance of being killed myself, voluntarily."

"Your opponent actually put the pistol in your hand, you say?"

"Yes; and he told me when I was to fire, and showed me how to pull the trigger. I do bless you! I never fired anything off before except pop-guns at school."

"It is very strange," said Cockle. "Have you ever seen those Tatum's since?"

“Never.”

“Do you know where they live?”

“On Blackheath, I believe.”

“Well, then, if you’ll take my advice, you will go thither to-morrow morning, and make a point of seeing old Tatum. Ask him what he knows of the fate of that young fellow Arden; ascertain, if you can, what became of the body: but, of course, avoid criminating, or in any way implicating yourself.”

“I’ll do it,” said David bravely. “Anything would be better than this perpetual suspense.”

“So I should think,” answered Cockle. “To-morrow, my friend Bob and I are going to my house in Somersetshire for a week or ten days: if you have anything important to communicate, this is my address;” and he gave a card.

“You do not, then, quite abandon me?”

“No, no. Cheer up; communicate with us there; and be assured that, if we can be of service to you, you may command us. I suppose we shall find you in Arundel-street on our return?”

“Certainly,” replied David; and his heart sank within him as he parted with his two companions and returned in solitude to his lodgings.

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let him in, and went to light a candle for him to seal his note when 'twas written."

"A very civil girl."

"Oh, very. But he didn't want no candle; for she met him in the passage, and he said he'd left his note on the table, and she let him out, and away he went."

"Well, there was no harm done."

"Oh, but wasn't there, though! When Mr. Briggs cum'd home from church,—oh lau! how poor Betty *did* screech! That 'ere man had taken away all the spoons, and all the forks, and two pair of silver candlesticks under his cloak; and a power of bank-notes out of a desk he'd been and broken open!"

"Indeed! I'm very sorry for it."

"Can't let you in, if you please," said the maid.

"Well, but I've very particular business with your master."

"Oh! master said, if a gentleman called about *very* particular business——"

"Yes?"

"Yours is very particular?"

"Urgent business."

"Oh! if it's *hurgent*, he must have meant you. You must call at number —, Blank Court, Cornhill."

David took out a pencil, and requested the

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“Your pleasure, sir?” said a dandified Jew boy of eighteen or nineteen.

“I wish to speak to Mr. Tatum,” murmured David, greatly agitated at the anticipated interview, and the nature of the topic to be discussed.

“Mr. Tatum never speaks to no one here; and if he did, he’s been gone pleasuring these six weeks.”

“Oh dear me!” said Dumps, “I have most particular business, and I brought this with me from Blackheath.”

“Oh yes; that’s master’s visiting-card, sure enough. All’s right, then. Here’s all you want sealed up in this packet.”

“Indeed!” said David. “I shall now, then, know all.”

“Oh yes; you’ll find it all right. It’s been lying here for you some time.”

“Oh, I wish I had called before!” said David, scarcely knowing what he did, as he mechanically took the packet.

“You see ’t isn’t *directed* to you,” said the lad with a knowing confidential wink; “because we thought you mightn’t like your name to be seen, for private reasons.”

“Oh! ah!” said David, shrinking as he felt that there was one more person in possession of his fatal secret.

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Somersetshire, and breaking the seals of this important packet in the presence of that gentleman and his guest Captain Kilkenny. He hastily packed up a few requisite articles, and merely telling his landlady that he was going into the country for a few days, he got into the Bath mail, and reached his friend's house, situated some miles from that city, very early the next morning.

Great was his disappointment when Mrs. Cockle informed him her husband and his friend had spent the last two days at Bath; but she assured him he was welcome, and added that she expected them home to dinner. David spent a very tedious, wretched day: the trees were all leafless, the walks were all sloppy, and there was a nasty drizzling rain. There is nothing so distressing as having a guest to amuse in a country house who can't amuse himself, and who plainly shows you, by his vacant, spiritless smiles and deep sighs, that your efforts are unavailing, and that he is wishing himself a hundred miles off. In such a case the wish *must* soon be mutual.

This was poor Mrs. Cockle's case; and at length, having done her best for three very long hours, she pursued her own avocations, and left him to amuse himself (or not) as best he could.

With an umbrella and clogs he went down to the village, thinking there never was in the world so dirty a place, quite forgetting that all country places must be dirty in wet weather. All the dogs barked at him—and that he did not like; and all the men, women, and children ran out to stare at him at the cottage doors. “What a set of plain people!” thought he. “I used to think Cheltenham the town *for beauty*; I’m sure *this* is (like sweet Auburn)

“‘The loveliest village of the *plain*!’

only that the village isn’t a bit more lovely than the people.”

He then walked round the church, looked at the tombstones, and in fact ascertained that there was nothing at all worth seeing; and then he returned to Cockle Hall, where the lady of the mansion informed him that her husband and Captain Kilkenny had agreed to join a party to the play at the Bath theatre that evening, and consequently would not return home until the next day.

“‘Then,” said her guest, “pray let me have a hack chaise, and I will go to them at Bath.”

Mrs. Cockle was only too happy to be spared a *tête-à-tête* with her guest, and in a quarter of

an hour, he, with his sealed packet, was on his way to Bath.

On his arrival at an hotel, being aware that his friends dined with a party, he took a slight and solitary repast, and about nine o'clock followed them to the theatre. Cockle, who was near the front with some ladies, turned round, looked surprised, nodded his head, and then gave all his attention to the stage. But David fortunately found Captain Kilkenny in the back row, and there being a vacant seat, he took it, and carried on a whispering conversation with him, in which Kilkenny readily joined, as he felt no small astonishment at seeing him there, and was anxious for an explanation.

"Well," said Kilkenny in a low tone, "I hope you've got good news?"

"I don't know; I've got it in my pocket."

"In your pocket!"

"Yes, sealed up."

"Silence!" said an old gentleman to the right.

"I wish people would let people hear the play!" said a fat lady to the left.

"Hush!" whispered David.

"Mum!" whispered Kilkenny.

For the first time David gave his attention

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Dumps, as loud as if he had been addressing a gentleman in the stage-box from the centre one which Mr. Cockle's party occupied.

"What is the matter with you?" said Kilkenny.

"'Tis *he*, I tell you," replied David in a hollow voice.

"You mean that actor?" said Kilkenny, referring to his play-bill.

"I do," answered David solemnly. "Can the grave give up its dead!"

"Turn him out!" cried everybody everywhere.

"By Jove, you are right!" said Kilkenny: "see here,—the part of Rolla by Mr. George Arden."

Mr. Dumps fainted away, and was removed to the hotel, attended by Captain Kilkenny, and speedily followed by Mr. Cockle.

When David began to recover himself, he had but a very indistinct recollection of the occurrences of the evening; but Kilkenny soon brought all vividly before him, by stating that he had already sent a note to the theatre, and had no doubt Mr. George Arden would join them as soon as he had finished his performance in the afterpiece.

"Coming!" cried David; "coming *here*?"

“ Yes, of course : it was the very best arrangement that could be made.”

“ Alive, or dead ?”

“ Alive, decidedly, or I and Cockle should never have volunteered to join your party.”

“ But how is all this to be accounted for ?” asked poor bewildered David.

“ It can only be explained by Mr. Arden himself,” replied Cockle : “ and here he comes to answer all your questions.”

Mr. George Arden was very naturally somewhat embarrassed at making his *début* in the character of Epilogue to his own tragedy, before the three gentlemen who had so anxiously awaited his arrival. But David evinced such extraordinary satisfaction at beholding him, and the other two seemed so placid, that Arden comfortably seated himself before the fire in the seat that was offered to him, and accepted the full glass which Cockle placed before him.

“ Alive, I do declare !” exclaimed David, gazing at Arden’s handsome face.

“ Quite so, I assure you, Mr. Dumps,” he replied, “ and not a little ashamed to meet one who has so much reason to complain of my conduct.”

“ And your health does not appear to have suffered ?”

“ I am quite well, thank you,” said Arden, laughing.

“ But the wound I inflicted, where was it ?”

“ In your own imagination.”

“ Nay, the loss of blood——”

“ —Was a theatrical contrivance precisely similar to that resorted to by the Rolla of this evening.”

“ Oh !” exclaimed David, taking a long breath.

“ Then,” said Kilkenny, “ that young lady must have been in the plot.”

“ Not at all,” replied Arden : “ I was plotting against *her* even more than against this good gentleman here. If you will do me the favour to listen, ‘ I will a round unvarnished tale deliver, of my whole course of love.’—Miss Tatum was at school at Brighton when first I saw her ; I was then a thoughtless young man, just entering on the arduous career of the stage. The young ladies were not, I suppose, permitted to go to the theatre ; therefore it was only in my walks that I met her. She was young and inexperienced,—too young for society, yet rather too old for school ; and in her ignorance she not only took me for an independent gentleman, but

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“ Ay, so you
David reproach

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induce the romantic young lady to marry the man who had fought for her."

"And why to *me*?" inquired Kilkenny.

"Because, as soon as I was supposed to be in a dying state, I knew I should require some active intelligent gentleman who would remove my hated rival from the field, and leave me and the lady of my love together."

"And a pretty set of dupes we were!" said Kilkenny.

"As soon as you were gone, Miss Tatum in the anguish of the moment threw off all reserve, and declared that if my life was spared, she would, in defiance of consequences, brave her father's anger, and marry the man whose blood then stained her pocket-handkerchief."

"Well," said David, "you married her?"

"Unfortunately," replied Arden, "the most difficult and embarrassing part of my performance yet remained to be acted: I had also to throw off reserve,—to confess that, instead of facing real danger, I had fallen at the report of a pistol primed with powder only, and that the stream of blood which saturated my Russia ducks had been obtained at a pork-shop in Boulogne, and conveyed about my person in a little bladder until the precise moment when I wished to frighten away Mr.

Dumps, and to gain an entire ascendancy over her too susceptible heart. 'He will perish at my feet!' cried the frantic girl; 'is there no help? let me bind up the wound!' But still I put off the confession that there was no wound at all, and, pressing her more closely in my arms, affected to grow fainter and fainter. I never was so completely puzzled in my life; for I dreaded, as well I might, giving my heroine the matter-of-fact information that she had been making much ado about nothing, and that I was perfectly well able to get up and walk back to Boulogne with her. At last with frantic energy she cried, 'Could I but be assured of your eventual recovery, I would watch unwearied by your side for months!' 'Would you?' I replied: 'then I have indeed put your affection sufficiently to the test.'

" 'What do you mean?' said Rebecca, as I very coolly rose from my recumbent position, and began to remove my blood-stained garments, which were in fact only *overalls*, and covered another suit.

" 'Be happy, my Rebecca!' I exclaimed: 'I am unhurt.'

" 'Unhurt!' cried the lady in utter amazement.

" 'Yes,' I answered, still arranging my coa-

tume, and washing my hands and face with the contents of a bottle of *eau-de-Cologne* which I had provided for the purpose.

“ ‘ I do not understand you, sir,’ said she.

“ ‘ The fact is, it was all a trick,’ I replied. :

“ ‘ And I the dupe !’ she exclaimed.

“ ‘ No, no,—Mr. Dumps—my rival,’ stammered I.

“ ‘ Rival ! you are well aware he was no rival,’ said Miss Tatum indignantly. ‘ I was the person to be deceived by this mountebank-trick ! Who are you, sir ?’

“ ‘ Dearest ! your devoted slave,’ I answered in my most insinuating tone.

“ ‘ After this exhibition, sir, I desire to know who and what you are ?’

“ ‘ Until our first meeting,’ I replied, ‘ I devoted my hours of recreation to Thespian pursuits.’

“ ‘ In plain language, you were a strolling player.’

“ ‘ I certainly had an engagement at——’

“ ‘ Oh, what a fool I have been !’ cried Rebecca, bursting into tears.

“ ‘ Forgive me ! oh, forgive me !’ I exclaimed, throwing myself on one knee, putting my head a little on one side, and clasping my hands together.

“ ‘ Rise, Mr. Arden,’ said she with an effort to assume composure : ‘ I feel that I have been much more to blame than yourself, and I have to thank you for a salutary lesson which I trust I never shall forget. Do not interrupt me,—entreaty, argument, expostulation, will be alike useless,—we part here probably never to meet again ; and to prove that I do not resent that which has truly been the result of my own want of prudence, I request you will take my purse, which will enable you the more easily to comply with my wishes when I entreat you—nay, command you to leave this place instantly, promising not to appear again in Boulogne, at least while I remain there.’

“ I took the purse, which was heavy, and confessing that without it I had not the means of leaving France, I asked her to point out the mode of my departure.

“ ‘ It is now past eleven,’ she replied ; ‘ at twelve the English coach to Calais will pass along that road which runs within a few hundred yards of us. It will in all probability arrive at Calais in time for the packet ; and should that be the case, you will be at Dover this evening, and in London early to-morrow.’

“ ‘ I obey you,’ I exclaimed ; ‘ but let me hope that years of devoted constancy may——’

“ ‘ Silence, sir !’ interrupted the indignant

lady. 'I shall instantly return home by this path, which leads along the edge of the cliffs to the houses on the Port: presume not to follow me.'

" 'I will not,' I replied.

" 'And you will leave this place in the manner I have suggested?' she inquired.

" 'I give you my word that I will do so,' I answered, honouring her for the good sense and decision which at once extinguished all my hopes.

" 'Then, sir,' said she, 'farewell for ever! I leave you without anger—nay, I leave you with regret, for I cannot but upbraid myself, feeling, as I do, that my folly has involved you in disappointment. God bless you, Mr. Arden! Should we ever meet again, and I be in a situation to assist you in any way, do not hesitate to apply to me: I shall consider it my duty to exert myself in your behalf.'

" 'She loves me still,' thought I.

" 'But, pray, understand, sir, that any future attempt on your part to renew an intimacy or a correspondence will entirely obliterate the good feeling which a sense of justice now induces me to avow. I wish you success and happiness, Mr. Arden,' she added; 'and now, farewell!'

" And, without once turning her head, she

“ ‘ Rise, Mr. Arden,’ ” she had chosen.
 to assume composure : “ ment, gazing after
 much more to blame at one lingering look
 to thank you for ing figure would at least
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 sent that me up at the hour she named ; and
 own w. dious were the winds and the tides, that
 my - at that day at Dover, and breakfasted the
 to morning at the Golden Cross, Charing-

“ And, after all, I ’m not a murderer ! ” ex-
 claimed David.

“ Having now explained everything, I will
 leave you, gentlemen,” said Arden. “ It is
 very late, and I am sure Mr. Dumps requires
 repose.”

“ O that I had known all this six weeks
 ago ! ” cried David after Arden had left the
 room. “ I might have explained everything to
 Mr. Mildmay, to Mr. Lomax, and——”

David paused, and looked as miserable as if
 his hands had still been stained with gore.

“ By the bye,” said Mr. Cockle, “ we have
 had letters from Cheltenham. We did not like
 to annoy you ; but, now that all can be ex-

to tell you that your friends
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"n't say so?" cried David. "Well,
rite to-morrow."

and I," said Kilkenny, "have had a letter
from Lorimer Lomax; and there is one passage
in his letter which deeply concerns you."

"What is it?" inquired David.

"Why, I should have hesitated to tell you;
but as you voluntarily deserted the lady, there
can be no great harm in reading what he says."

"Read it," said David breathlessly.

"Here it is," continued Kilkenny, producing
the letter: "read it yourself."

He pointed to the passage; and David read
aloud, "I am going to be married to-morrow to
your friend Mr. Dumps's former love."

The letter fell from David's hand.

"To-morrow! — then they are married!"
cried he; "then the stain has been removed
too late!"

"By the bye," said Mr. Cockle, "you have
not opened your packet. 'Tis true that we now
know everything we want to know without its
aid; but you may as well break the seals."

"Open it," replied David passively, hand-
ing the sealed parcel across the table to Cockle.

walked along the path which she had chosen. I stood in a state of bewilderment, gazing after her, and fully expecting that one lingering look from the rapidly-departing figure would at least revive hope in my bosom ; but she was resolute, and on she walked, never looking back, until at length her form faded from my view. I have never seen her since. The Telegraph coach took me up at the hour she named ; and so propitious were the winds and the tides, that I dined that day at Dover, and breakfasted the next morning at the Golden Cross, Charing-cross."

"And, after all, I'm not a murderer!" exclaimed David.

"Having now explained everything, I will leave you, gentlemen," said Arden. "It is very late, and I am sure Mr. Dumps requires repose."

"O that I had known all this six weeks ago!" cried David after Arden had left the room. "I might have explained everything to Mr. Mildmay, to Mr. Lomax, and——"

David paused, and looked as miserable as if his hands had still been stained with gore.

"By the bye," said Mr. Cockle, "we have had letters from Cheltenham. We did not like to annoy you ; but, now that all can be ex-

plained, it is best to tell you that your friends there are at least aware there was a rumour of a murder."

"You don't say so?" cried David. "Well, I must write to-morrow."

"And I," said Kilkenny, "have had a letter from Lorimer Lomax; and there is one passage in his letter which deeply concerns you."

"What is it?" inquired David.

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"To-morrow! — then they are married!" cried he; "then the stain has been removed too late!"

"By the bye," said Mr. Cockle, "you have not opened your packet. 'Tis true that we now know everything we want to know without its aid; but you may as well break the seals."

"Open it," replied David passively, handing the sealed parcel across the table to Cockle.

The seals were broken, and the envelopes unfolded, until a small red morocco case was visible : and on opening that, to David's utter amazement, he beheld a very handsome diamond necklace, with brooch, bracelets, and earrings to match !

CHAPTER XXI .

“ DARING ROBBERY !

“ FIFTY POUNDS REWARD !

“ WHEREAS on the afternoon of the 16th instant a person entered the shop of Messrs. Tatum and Swop, number —, Blank Court, Cornhill, and by a false statement, and the production of a card purporting to come from one of the partners, he obtained possession of diamonds of very considerable value. He has been traced to his lodgings in Arundel-street, Strand, by information given by the hackney-coachman who conveyed him there ; but, as he left the house abruptly that night, it is supposed he is gone towards the coast. He passed at his lodgings under the name of David Dumps ; is about five feet in height, between five-and-twenty and thirty years of age, rather stout, dark wig, sallow complexion, grey eyes, and a melancholy cast of countenance. Whoever will give such information as may lead to his apprehension will receive the above reward.”

Before our hero left his bed in the morning after his interview with George Arden, Captain Kilkenny entered his room with the Morning Herald of the preceding day in his hand, and exclaimed,

“Wish me joy ! I have fifty pounds at my command this morning, when I least expected such a windfall.”

“Fifty pounds !” cried David. “Ah, you are one of the lucky ones ! I might look into newspapers long enough before I should find any intelligence appertaining to myself.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” replied Kilkenny. “Besides, what are fifty pounds, compared with those brilliants you exhibited last night ?”

“Talking of those brilliants,” answered he, sitting up in bed, and looking even more serious than usual, “do you know, I dreamt of them !”

“Did you indeed !”

“Yes : I thought I’d take another look at them ; and when I opened the box, they were changed into a suit of jet.”

“Ominous, hey ?”

“*Very* ominous. One thing is certain—they never could be intended for me ; and should the error be discovered, I suppose they’ll make a very unpleasant row about it.”

"My good friend," said Kilkenny, "that is precisely what has brought me to your bed-side at this unseasonable hour. Prompt measures must instantly be taken; for the error is discovered, and the very unpleasant row has commenced."

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, indeed; and the fifty pounds I mentioned is the precise sum I am to receive on delivering you into the hands of justice."

"Oh!" cried poor David, throwing himself back in his bed, "do it,—do it at once. I'll make no defence,—I'll give no explanation,—I'd rather be killed than go on as I have done all my life. I've been labouring under an imputation of murder for months, and, what was worse, thought myself guilty; and now, the very day that my character is cleared and my conscience relieved of *that* crime, I am publicly accused of robbery!—Take the fifty pounds, and let me die!"

And David pulled the clothes over his head, and rolling himself up in a ball, gave way to a low melancholy moaning.

"Come, come, man, this won't do!" said Kilkenny, with difficulty refraining from laughter. "Peep out of your nest, will you? Nay, for goodness' sake, don't make that doleful noise!"

Let me see your face, and listen to me calmly ;” and he gradually revealed David’s countenance by forcibly pulling away the blanket.

— How can you ask me to be calm !” cried David, starting up in a rage. “ You ’re in a rage against me,—all the world are up in arms against me, I believe.”

— Your present difficulty can easily be removed,” said Kilkenny, “ for all can be explained : Cockle, myself, and indeed several other witnesses, can prove that your explanation is correct, and that you were yourself astonished at the contents of the packet, which you opened in our presence.”

“ True,” said David ; “ there’s something in that.”

“ To be sure,” added Kilkenny, “ it is unfortunate that they should have obtained your name at your lodgings, and made it public.”

“ My name ! — published ! — give me the paper !” exclaimed Dumps ; and having hastily read the paragraph, he again moaned, and again retired under the blankets.

Captain Kilkenny, seeing that consolation in the present state of David’s mind would be thrown away, went at once to the respectable proprietor of the hotel, pointed out to him the paragraph, and acknowledged that the occupant

of "number thirty-seven" was the individual alluded to therein. He, however, fully explained the circumstances, and stated that Mr. Cockle and himself were going to accompany Mr. Dumps immediately to London.

Every morning and evening paper contained the paragraph we have quoted; and as Mr. Dumps had, as a matter of course, been addressed by his own name at the hotel, Kilkenny's explanation was a matter of necessity. Mr. Cockle, who lived within a morning's drive of Bath, and always went to the same hotel, was a sufficient guarantee for the accuracy of all the captain had stated; and, after an early breakfast, the trio set off for London, Mr. Cockle leaving at his lodge-gate, as he passed, a note explanatory of his sudden departure.

David said little during his journey; and his kind and considerate companions did not attempt to enliven him, rightly judging, that until the imputation of felony was removed, he could not be expected to shake off his despondency. They arrived in London at night, so late that no business in the City could be attended to; but at a very early hour, both Cockle and Kilkenny repaired to number —, Blank Court, Cornhill,—replaced the jewels, not in the hands

of the careless Jew boy, but in the possession of Tatum's confidential partner, and, after full and satisfactory explanations, Mr. Swop prepared a paragraph for the evening papers, contradictory of that which had disturbed the peace of our well-meaning and much-misunderstood hero.

Left to himself for at least three hours, he had at first paced his apartment with rapid and irregular strides; but as the conviction came upon him, that, however humiliating it might be to have even temporary publicity given to his name in connexion with a supposed robbery, still his character must immediately be cleared, he became more tranquil, and, sitting down by the fire with calmer feelings but with deeper gloom, he thought of her, now, alas! wedded to another, with whom he had once hoped to unite his destiny! How galling to him was the consideration that *she* must have seen, either in the "Post," "Herald," "Times," or "Chronicle," "Globe," "Courier," "Standard," or "Sun," the hated paragraph! Perhaps her husband at the breakfast-table handed it with a smile to her across the muffins, secretly exulting in the degradation even of an unsuccessful rival: and all this, too, at a time when her mind had already been poisoned against

him, and when his name was whispered in connexion with a deed of blood !

“ I will write to her,” said he to himself ;—
“ yes, I will write ;—I will ask for one interview, merely to clear my character—she cannot refuse that : and then, though we shall never meet again, I shall live—or die—comparatively happy !”

When his two friends returned from their protracted interview with Mr. Swop, they found him much more composed than they expected.

“ You may now,” said Cockle, “ feel perfectly at ease—no one can ever esteem you less on account of this extraordinary mistake—and we have brought you an evening paper, containing the paragraph that fully and unequivocally exonerates you.”

“ Thank you,” replied Dumps : “ I must send it off by the post to Cheltenham, and at the same time this letter, which I have written in your absence ;—pray tell me Mr. Lomax’s present address ?”

“ ‘ The Promenade, Cheltenham,’ is sure to reach him,” said Kilkenny : “ but why have you written to him on the subject ?”

“ I have not written to *him* ; I have written to—to——”

“ To whom ?” said Cockle inconsiderately.

“To his — wife,” replied David, speaking thickly.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Cockle: “take care what you ’re about.”

“You may read the letter,” said he: and Cockle, taking it from his hand, read aloud as follows:

“DEAR MADAM,

“You may start at receiving a letter from one who, however well known to you in former and, to him, happier days, has since been accused of two of the worst of crimes — murder and robbery. Pray grant me one brief interview, in which I may prove to you that I am innocent: this will be some consolation to me during my future solitary existence; and wishing you every happiness, I shall bless you for your kindness. I leave London to-night, and shall be in Cheltenham when you receive this; pray, therefore, put me out of suspense, and address one line to me at the Waterloo Hotel.

“I remain, madam,

“Your obedient humble servant,

“DAVID DUMPS.”

“Then you and your letter, I suppose, start together by the same conveyance?” said Cockle.

"Exactly so. I am unfortunately now so well known at Cheltenham, that were I to write a note at the hotel on my arrival, and send it by a porter, my motives would be questioned, and I should be mobbed before I could keep my appointment in the Promenade. This letter, with the newspaper, will be delivered by the postman, while I shall rest quietly in my bedroom at an hotel, where I trust I shall not be recognised, until I am summoned by Mrs. Lomax's reply."

"It is not badly planned," replied Kilkenny; "and may success attend you!"

"Success!" said the sufferer with a ghastly smile; "what have I to anticipate success in!"

"Well, let us hear of you, at least," cried Cockle. "And remember, having well cleared your character, you will be at liberty to select another lady, who may not prove so fickle."

"You don't know *me*," answered David: "I never should have had the courage to own I loved, had not she — I beg your pardon — I shall be better by and bye——"

"What?" said Kilkenny.

"—Had not she *seemed* to love *me*. But that illusion is past: all I want now is to make her confess that no misconduct on my part authorised her union with another."

"When you want change of scene, come to

Cockle Hall—a cheerful country place, a pretty village, and a healthy situation.”

“ Thank you,” said David, perfectly recollecting the agreeable morning he had spent there; and shaking hands with his friends, he went to prepare himself for his journey.

The horn sounded; “ Cheltenham mail !” was shouted by porters, waiters, boots, and chambermaids; and our hero took his place with three other persons in the interior. He could not sleep. In how short a period would he again stand before her who was still dearer to him than all the world! How soon would that brief interview be over!—and then, what was to become of him? to whom should he turn for consolation? Such were his cogitations during the long, dark, wintry night; and in the morning he alighted at the Waterloo Hotel, Cheltenham, thoroughly worn out, and dispirited.

David entered the inn enveloped in a cloak, the collar of which was elevated to hide as much of the *lower* part of his face as possible; and on his head was a seal-skin cap, very much the colour of sponge, the flaps of which were lowered and nearly enveloped the *upper* part of his face, so that neither the waiter who ushered him in, nor the chambermaid who

prepared his room, could form the least guess what manner of man he was.

From the inmost recesses of his cap and the collar of his cloak came forth a muffled voice demanding a fire and hot water; and both these luxuries being obtained, he double-locked his door, and threw himself upon the bed.

Suddenly he started up, enveloped himself as before, rang the bell, and inquired of the chambermaid whether the post was yet delivered.

"The man's just been here with the letters," said Sarah, simpering.

"Oh, he has been here;—none for me, of course?"

"You haven't told me your name, sir," said Sarah.

"I know—there *can* be none for me," added David. "Tell me, my good girl, are the letters delivered at the same hour in the Promenade?"

"Much about the same," said Sarah.

"She's got it, then!" cried he, clasping his hands. "You may go."

Again Sarah departed to tell the waiter she couldn't make out the man in the cloak; and David locked his door once more. Presently he again roused himself:

"If her answer is brought, as they do not know my name, they will let it lie in the hat."

Again he rang the bell, and Sarah made her appearance; and this time the mysterious stranger threw off the incognito so far as to say, that if any letter was left for Mr. Dumps, it must be brought to him directly.

Can any torture exceed the anxiety of moments like these!—the waiting, watching, eagerly listening for a person or a letter which comes not! Now he started up, and paced the room backwards and forwards; then, hearing a noise below or on the stairs, he ran to the door and opened it, and went forward a few paces and peeped over the bannisters. But as the noise subsided, and no one sought his room, he again retired, and sat down by his fire and poked it; and having utterly done away with the very little inclination which it had hitherto shown to light up, he threw down the poker, and paced his narrow den.

A renewal of the noise below again attracted him forth, and he heard a voice saying,

"You are sure *that* is his name?"

"Yes, sir; he said so," was the reply.

"A new arrival?"

"Yes, sir."

He now distinctly heard somebody coming towards his room,—he did not dare to breathe. There was a knock at the door, and Sarah smilingly entered, saying, “A letter for you, sir.”

Without turning his head, he pointed to the table, and murmured, “Put it down.”

He could not have ventured to open it in the presence of Sarah or any other human being!

When he was again alone, he rose, locked the door, walked to the table on which lay the letter, looked at it, took it up, threw it down, and felt as if he were going to faint.

“What is the matter with me?” cried he at last. “Let me know at once whether I am to see her again.” With trembling hand he broke the seal and took off the envelope. (What a bore is an envelope to a man in a hurry!) He unfolded the enclosure, and read as follows:

“The Master of the Ceremonies’ first Ball for the winter season will take place on Thursday next, the sixteenth of December.”

David crumpled it up in his hands, and made use of an expression exceedingly indecorous, and improper for us to transcribe, and most unceremonious as applied to a master of the ceremonies.

But the period of suspense must one way or

another, sooner or later, come to an end ; and when Sarah again knocked at the door, she brought an exceedingly small envelope of pink paper, containing the minutest possible note, extremely odoriferous, and in pale blue ink was written the following brief address :

“ To DAVID DUMPS, Esq.

“ Mrs. Lorimer Lomax presents her compliments to Mr. Dumps, and will be happy to receive him as soon as it is convenient to him to favour her with a call.”

Mrs. Lorimer Lomax ! Yes, there it was,—not exactly in black and white, but in pink and blue ! She had indeed renounced and forgotten him, and she now unfeelingly addressed him under the hated name which identified her as another's ! A rumour may be false, an assertion incorrect ; and he had travelled to Cheltenham with a vague, indistinct, unacknowledged notion that, after all, he might be happy ; but now the rumour was corroborated by her own pen, and he crushed the letter in his hand. But there was no time for inactive regrets : he put on his great-coat, and prepared for his visit. He would now have given worlds to have avoided this interview ; but he had sought it, had travelled many miles to obtain it, and the lady had condescended to grant his very

urgent request. He could not, therefore, think of evading it, and therefore slowly and reluctantly he walked towards the Promenade.

"Alas!" said he to himself, "I know her well,—she will laugh at me! Oh, Clara, Clara! would that we had never met!"

He knocked at the door, and the footman ushered him up stairs into the drawing-room, where he was left alone to meditate over the little articles of *bijouterie* which ornamented the tables.

"Here she spends her mornings," soliloquised David; "here she probably read the account of my imputed robbery,—here she received my letter, and there lies the pen with which she this morning addressed me. Here, too, her husband sits with her, and talks to her, and doubtless abuses me. Oh! why came I hither?"

But he heard a footstep,—he turned, and the master of the house, the husband of the lady, stood before him, and holding out his hand, uttered a frank and hearty welcome.

David could not take the proffered hand,—he could not speak;—there was something so heartless in a man's supplanting another in the affections of a girl, being all the time perfectly aware of their attachment, and then assuming

towards him so grossly wronged the language of friendship. David sank down on a chair.

“My good sir,” exclaimed Lomax, “you have, I fear, suffered much since we met.”

“I have indeed,” replied David.

“But now, I trust, your sorrows are over.”

“Over !”

“Yes ; be assured that no one has the slightest doubt of your integrity : you have not lost one friend in consequence of that unfortunate rumour.”

“Not lost a friend !” said his visitor bitterly ; “no, perhaps not, for I had not one friend left.”

“Nay, you really wrong us : to say nothing of others, there are myself and Mrs. Lomax.”

“Mrs. Lomax !”

“Yes ; you *did* profess once to take an interest in her, and she really has felt much for you.”

“Well !” exclaimed David, “this really exceeds everything I could have anticipated.”

“What *do* you mean, my good fellow ?” said Lomax.

“Why, after all that has passed between Mrs. Lomax and myself within the last two months, I really think I might have been spared——”

"Passed between you? Oh dear me! speak to her yourself—you must have misinterpreted her intentions. Here she is."

The door opened; Mr. Dumps rose from his seat; and Mrs. Lorimer Lomax, in the form of Miss Rebecca Tatum, entered the room. David sank down again, and the lady, crossing the room, and, with some confusion of manner, extended her hand towards him.

"Miss Tatum!" exclaimed he.

"Mrs. Lomax, you must call me now," she replied; "and as I was a very giddy, foolish, girl when we last met, I shall beg you to forget the past, and to date our acquaintance from this day."

"You seem astonished!" exclaimed Lomax. "I thought you were aware of my marriage with your old acquaintance."

"I *am* astonished indeed," replied David.

"Yet surely," said Rebecca, "your letter alluded to our former meeting."

"Oh dear no: I thought I was addressing another lady!"

"Then who, in the name of wonder, did you think I had married?" inquired Lomax.

"Clara;—I mean, Miss Titterton."

"Oh, I understand now."

"And is *she*—" he paused.

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“The devil take such friendship!” thought David, as the intercepted correspondence with George Arden flashed upon his memory. But he had now seen a little of the world; so he smiled at Mr. Lomax, bowed to Mrs. Lomax, and kept his thoughts to himself.

“And now can we be of any use to you?” said Lomax: “will you dine with us to-day?”

“To be candid, I must acknowledge, I can enter into no engagement—I can think of nothing—until I have seen Clara.”

“Of course not,” replied Mrs. Lomax considerably: “they still live in Cambray.”

“I must go thither;—and yet perhaps I ought to prepare her for the visit. You are acquainted with her; will you do me favour of calling there, my name having been so unfortunately linked with your father’s?”

“Oh, that horrid mistake!” interrupted the lady: “we all know *you* were not to blame.”

“Well, then, will you announce my arrival to her?”

“Why, I know her very slightly; but here is one of her most intimate friends, who, I am sure, will be happy to oblige you.”

The door opened, and a stout good-looking

lady walked in and shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Lomax ; and then the latter, turning round, exclaimed,

“ Dear me ! I must not forget to make you two acquainted. Lady Betty O’Flaney, allow me to present Mr. David Dumps.”

“ David Dumps !” cried her ladyship, sitting down hastily, and holding her handkerchief before her face.

And Mr. Dumps, perfectly well recollecting when and where he had last seen that lady, immediately seized his hat, bowed himself out of the room, and left the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

With a palpitating heart and a trembling hand David knocked at Mr. Titterton's door in Cambray Place. But, however confused his thoughts might be, he had the discretion to ask for Mr. Mildmay; and that gentleman being at home, he was at once ushered into the drawing-room. Mr. Mildmay joined him immediately, and received him with a kindness which at once dispelled all his anxiety.

"We have been very much interested about you," said he.

"You saw that paragraph, I fear?" replied David.

"Oh yes; but I received a letter from London which exonerated you, even before I read the newspaper refutation."

"Indeed!"

"And I have heard a full and particular account of your interview with Mr. Arden."

"You astonish me!"

"Oh, you have not been forgotten by your

friends, I assure you, though you did leave us all so cavalierly. Why did you not frankly confide the truth to me? all would have been well, and you, as well as *other people*, might have been spared much anxiety."

"I dared not," replied David: "indeed, until I saw Mr. Arden, I really supposed him dead."

"Well, we must have no more misunderstandings."

"Indeed I hope not. I came to Cheltenham to enter into every explanation which could be demanded."

"Oh, I am sorry for that," said Mildmay.

"Nay, you have kindly acknowledged that you were all interested for me; therefore an explanation could not be intrusive. May I ask what kind friend it was who wrote my exculpation from the charge of robbery, before you read it in the paper?"

"Certainly,—it was my niece."

"Clara?"

"Yes, Clara. She has been in London since Monday, staying with my unmarried sister in Baker-street."

"And Mr. Titterton?"

"He is with her. I stayed behind to arrange some trifling business, and mean to join them to-morrow."

"Then, pray let me travel with you," exclaimed David. "I have come to Cheltenham to very little purpose; and now the sooner I go back to London the better. I once offered to become your travelling companion from Arras: you avoided me then,—perhaps I shall be more fortunate now."

Mr. Mildmay willingly acceded to his proposal, and at an early hour the next morning they were on their way to the metropolis.

Clara Titterton had, as Mr. Mildmay said, written him the true statement of David's imputed misdemeanor; and having also seen Captain Kilkenny since her arrival in London, she was aware that he was as innocent of murder as he was of felony. We have already sufficiently betrayed her kindly feelings towards David; and when her uncle announced to her that he had been his travelling companion, and would in all probability pay her a very early visit the next day, she laughingly said that she supposed he was then to be put upon his trial.

"And what will your verdict be?"

"Oh!" cried Clara, "I am no judge."

"His fate is in your hands."

"Well, then, I'll acquit him, and send him about his business."

"No, no,—keep him out of harm's way for the future."

Clara laughed ; but she did not think of the meeting that was in store for her without many a serious reflection. Was David for ever to be the victim of petty annoyances?—and was she, if united to him, doomed to participate in the discomfort which they entailed? She had no such dread ; she knew right well that any inactive mind must inevitably be depressed by trifles which would pass unheeded by one whose hands and thoughts were well employed.

When he appeared before her, and for the first time ventured to kiss her cheek, she laughed heartily, and told him that his adventures would entitle him to become a hero of romance.

“ And will you be my heroine ? ” said he.

“ Certainly not ! ” exclaimed Clara : “ I must have no more adventures.”

“ And how will you extricate me from them ? ”

“ Just as I would keep children out of mischief,—by giving them something to do.”

“ But what *can* I do at my age? I am too old for a profession.”

“ Fortunately, as I ’m told, you are rich enough to dispense with professional pursuits ; but, depend on it, you would have been happier in a surplice, a barrister’s wig, a sailor’s jacket, or a soldier’s coat.”

“It may be so ; but regret comes too late.”

“Not a bit of it : there is employment for every man who has intellect and a right hand. Leaving literary pursuits out of the question, you can cultivate cabbages, or turn ivory toys, or stick pins in insects and arrange them side by side in glass cases ; nay, men had better make cabbage-nets, or do worsted work, however effeminate some may deem such employments—far better than loiter and lounge about the world, simpering at the follies of other people, and laying themselves open to any hoax, jest, or worry, which the idle in *their* folly may wantonly throw upon them.”

“There’s some truth in what you say, certainly,” said David ; “and to prove I think so, in future I will endeavour to find for every season an appropriate occupation.”

There is no period in people’s lives so intensely interesting to themselves as that between the final arrangement that they are to be married and the wedding-day itself. But the principal performers of the scene are so wrapped up in each other, that they become unfit for general society, and to quiet lookers-on the performance is anything but agreeable. We will therefore spare the reader the details of a four months’ engagement, and ushering

him into the spring-time of the year, we will seek our hero and heroine in the Zoological Gardens, precisely one week before the day fixed for their wedding.

“Are they not lively dears?” said Clara.

“What, — the monkeys?” replied David.

“Yes, sufficiently so to make a human being never wish to be lively.”

“Oh, nonsense! Look at that grave cogitating monkey by himself in the corner,—surely he is more laughable than his neighbours. Since we must resemble them, be as much like the merry ones as possible, I beg of you.”

“Come and walk with me in a more retired path,” pleaded the lover.

“Why so?” replied Clara; gently yielding.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “you cannot fully enter into my feelings,—you have loved before.”

“You are very impertinent,” said Clara, “to impute anything of the kind to me. But I do not mean to spoil you by allowing you to suppose that *you* are ‘my *first* love, my *only* love.’ You, too, cannot deny that you have loved long before we met.”

“Never,” replied David.

“Never!”

“No, never,—I never professed the slightest preference for any one before I saw you.”

"Indeed!" said Clara, and at that moment they approached the elephant's play place, and among the numbers who were assembled round it was a lady who came forward to David with a most insinuating smile.

"Surely I cannot be mistaken," said she in a voice of sweetest tone: "Mr. Dumps, I believe?"

David bowed.

"Oh, you really must not forget *me*. Do you not remember those *sweet* days we passed together at Malvern, when that *dear* Lavinia was with me?"

"Who was *dear* Lavinia?" whispered Clara maliciously.

"I know you *doted* on Lavinia, and I've often thought she was very silly; but Claverton and she are gone to *sweet* Italy. Claverton is a *dear* fellow, after all."

"I hope Mr. Carey is well?" said David, feeling it necessary to say something.

"Yes, tolerable, — that is, *for him*. He's quite my misery, — gout, rheumatism, and lumbago. And *such* lodgings as we have!"

"I shall do myself the pleasure of calling."

"Oh no, don't, — there's no Lavy now, and the stairs are vile, — I'm at home to nobody. But I've heard of *your* intended marriage,"

added Mrs. Carey ; and putting up her glass at Clara, she added in a half whisper, " Well, you could not expect another Lavy, young and lovely, and your soul's *first* idol. I wish you well, Mr. Dumps." And away she went.

" Well," exclaimed Clara, laughing, " this is really too good ! You, who were so vehemently professing never to have smiled on a young lady before, are now actually convicted of a proposal, and a refusal !"

" All a misrepresentation, I assure you," said her admirer ; and as they walked round the garden, he told Clara all his Malvern history.

" And," exclaimed Clara when he had finished, " do you really suppose that I wished for such an explanation ; or that I, at my age, (rather older than yourself, I believe,) pretend to say that I never had a lover till I saw you ?"

" That I never thought likely ; but I can positively say, *I* never loved till I saw *you*."

Luckily for David, they were now at the gate of the gardens ; and when he had handed Clara into her father's carriage, she had barely time for a shake of the head and a knowing laugh ere she vanished from his sight.

But we have declared that we will not dwell

upon these trivial details; and however much we may wish to keep our hero single, (and what is a hero when once he becomes a Benedict?) we now find ourselves hurried to the evening immediately preceding the wedding-day.

David and his intended were sitting together; he silently cogitating on the future—she inspecting the bridal dress and veil, which had just been brought home.

“A letter from our friends at Cockle Hall,” said he after reading a despatch which had been delivered to him, “to remind us of our promised visit.”

“Well,” replied Clara, “it is all settled. We are to be with them the day after to-morrow, to take an early dinner, on our way to Bath.”

“Yes, Cockle and Kilkenny will not return home until that day: they are gone to some party in the neighbourhood.”

“Well, I leave all the arrangements to you,” replied Clara: “to-morrow is Friday.”

“Yes, by the bye, we *ought not* to have been married on a Friday!”

“Nonsense!—on Saturday we shall reach our friends early.”

“Yes,” replied David; “we sleep within twenty miles of Cockle Hall.”

“ Another packet for you, I protest !”

“ For me !” exclaimed David : “ gloves—white gloves, of course ; I wonder who sent them !” And he deliberately unfolded the paper. They were, as he supposed, a wedding present of gloves : and no doubt the donor had intended to send a dozen pair of white kid ; but, by some mischance, only eleven pair of white had been packed up, and the twelfth pair was one of *black kid for mourning* ! Clara leant back in her chair, laughing, when she saw them ; but David threw them down, pale and trembling, and exclaimed,

“ Oh, Clara, we ought *not* to marry on a Friday !”

But notwithstanding David’s misgivings, at an early hour on Friday morning Baker-street was in a state of unusual excitement. The habitation of Miss Mildmay, generally the most tranquil house in the street, was besieged by various artisans at a period when the gentle spinster was on ordinary occasions slumbering in her own apartment.

She had liberally offered to give Clara a breakfast after the ceremony ; and Gunter’s men, with baskets, trays, and ice-pails, gave the note of preparation soon after daylight.

Then appeared maid-servants at the area

gate dressed in their very best, eager to talk to the milk-woman, and the muffin-man, and the baker who brought the three dozen extra rolls for the *déjeûné à la fourchette*; and Mr. Mildmay's man and Mr. Titterton's man having new liveries on the occasion, came and lounged at the door, apparently only to talk to one another, but in reality to show themselves to the maids at the two opposite houses, who were busy dusting their respective drawing-rooms.

Ten o'clock came, and the bridal party having some distance to go to church, (for David, faithful to old associations, would be married at that nearest to Burying-ground Buildings, Paddington Road,) Mr. Titterton's carriage came to the door, and was soon followed by Mr. O'Flaney's and Mr. Mildmay's. There were very few people to witness the departure of the little party to the church: it was too early for an assemblage of importance; but the maids had said enough to excite the curiosity of the muffin-man, and a Jew who sold old clothes stood by his side to see Clara in white satin and orange blossoms step into the carriage, followed by two lovely bridesmaids, and accompanied by her father, her uncle, and Mr. and Lady Betty O'Flaney.

But what was wanting to give effect and importance to the departure, was amply compensated for when the party about mid-day returned from the church. There was David's new chariot, and three more private carriages in addition to those we have already mentioned: and there were two or three cabs belonging to smart-looking men, who left their tigers in charge of the horses. Then there were six or eight hackney-coaches, nice clean yellow ones, evidently not taken at random, but judiciously selected from several stands. And there were at least six flies; but they ought to have been mentioned before the hackney-coaches, because, though they are drawn only by one horse, there is a sort of privacy and gentility about them with which jarvies cannot pretend to compete. In the rear of all, a few hack cabs were indistinctly seen: but perhaps we are injudicious in alluding to them.

The street, too, began now to assume an air of bustle and curiosity adequate to the occasion. The muffin-man having gone his rounds in unusual haste, had resumed his post; and by his side was the old clothesman, whose bag was much swelled since we last saw him. The man with Punch and Judy lingered before the

house ; but, with singular good taste and delicacy of feeling, he refrained from exhibiting *his* hero and heroine, not wishing to throw into shade the bride and bridegroom. A band with drum and panspipes, and an organ, began a *charming* and appropriate melody ; only the organ played in one key and the panspipes in another, and the drum was banged indiscriminately in no key at all. Immediately opposite to the windows, the Italian boy with images on a tray took his station ; and another sallow dark-eyed urchin, who had a monkey tied to the end of a long string, allowed the beast to climb up to the balcony, and enter the drawing-room where the guests were eating the bridal breakfast.

Suddenly the monkey retreated from the drawing-room : there was evidently a movement among the guests ; the hall-door opened, and David led forth MRS. DUMPS, handed her into the carriage, and seated himself by her side. Hands and handkerchiefs were waved from the balcony ; the postilions in the red jackets and the white favours had their orders, and the four horses dashed off towards the Bath road, bearing behind them our happy couple. Surely at that auspicious moment even David Dumps forgot that his wedding-day was a Friday !

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Becky Tatum "*breathed her last adieu*" to gentle George Arden near Napoleon's pillar on the hills by Boulogne-sur-Mer, it may be supposed that she really deeply felt her humiliation, and that she was not exaggerating when she said that she had received a lesson which would never be obliterated from her mind.

We fear that her unfortunate, though innocent, intimacy with a young man of whose birth, parentage, and education she knew nothing, may have very seriously prejudiced our readers against her: but let it be remembered that there were some allowances to be made for her.

Low-born and low-bred, she was sent to a high-polishing establishment, where she associated with girls destined to move in a sphere very different to her own, and where, unfortunately, she also acquired habits and notions utterly unfit for the pawnbroker's daughter.

We do not mean to say that the wives of courtiers and right honourables have not started forth from pickle-jars, blacking-bottles, and very possibly from the sanctorum of "*my uncle*," decorated with three brass balls over the door : it would be well if courtiers and right honourables never descended *lower* than to the virtuous daughters of respectable retired tradesmen. But admitting that tradesmen's daughters may make what are called great marriages, and not stopping to inquire whether such marriages are really satisfactory in their results, we merely mean to state, that it often happens that the highly-educated and refined daughter does not attract the attention of some impoverished lordling or needy scion of a noble house ; and then, when she leaves school, what is to be her fate ?

We have seen that Rebecca Tatum's residence at Miss Perfect's academy was prolonged beyond the usual period ; home was hateful to her, and she continued as a sort of parlour-boarder long after her companions of her own age had joyously returned home.

Now, if Becky Tatum thought her father an exceedingly vulgar, ungentlemanlike person, and felt his society absolutely unbearable, it was not her own fault. , All the young ladies

brought up at Miss Perfect's school would have voted him intolerable ; and Becky merely evinced that aversion for bad manners which it was one of the main objects of Miss Perfect to inculcate. Let us, then, so far do justice to the pawnbroker's daughter as to exonerate her from at least a portion of the blame, and acknowledge that had she been sent to Mrs. Snooks's school, (where Tatum's neighbours Bubb the grocer and Wallop the hosier sent their daughters,) she would have thought home, as it really was, a much finer place than Mrs. Snooks's house ; would have looked forwards to her holidays with delight ; and would not only have sworn eternal friendship for the Miss Bubbs and the Miss Wallops, but would also in due course of time very probably have become a member of one or other of those families. The great error lay, then, in the unpolished father and mother sending their only child to an instructress whose professed business it was to teach her to be as unlike them as possible, and to render her so refined and fastidious as to be miserable in their society. If such a girl marries, she is so far removed from them as to be little incommoded by their vulgarity ; and if they can receive her aggrandisement as a recompense for the filial affection

which they might have received from a girl differently brought up, the parents have nothing to complain of. But should she not marry, how wretched is the refined lady in the parlour of the unrefined parents !

Such was Miss Tatum's case, and she remained at school until the death of her mother. That she was anxious to marry is certain : she thought of a prolonged residence at Blackheath with horror. When Mr. George Arden uttered many things very flattering to her vanity, seeing that he looked like a gentleman, she began to hope that he was the being destined to snatch her from a home she hated, and from the morning and evening visitations of the Miss Wallops and the Miss Bubbs, and, above all, the very pointed attentions of Mr. Anthony Wallop and of Mr. Nathaniel Bubb—those gentlemen having latterly stepped forward as rival suitors for the honour of her hand and fortune.

We do not vindicate her clandestine encouragement of Mr. Arden ; but we blame her parents more than herself. For her unguarded conduct, and for her connivance at the trick played off by her lover on poor unsuspecting Mr. Dumps, she was, as we have seen, most amply punished, and she returned to her

father's lodgings full of shame and repentance.

She had met no one that morning in her walk but Captain Kilkenny. She afterwards passed him as if she was unconscious that she had ever seen him before ; and she very soon prevailed on her father to leave Boulogne and return to Blackheath.

She there did everything in her power to atone for the past ; and though her father, good unsuspecting man, never heard one word of the *sanguinary* meeting, (so influential to poor David's fate, and so distressing to poor Rebecca,) she felt that it was her duty by future attention to make amends for past neglect and duplicity. She therefore assured him that Mr. Arden was discarded, and would never be again received by her ; and he having turned Mr. Dumps out of the house as the detected *go-between*, felt perfectly satisfied, gave his daughter a kiss, and asked no more questions.

Old Tatum was overjoyed at Rebecca's change of manner. She did not avoid him : she always came down to receive him when he returned from the city ; she would listen to him when he talked for half an hour together about things utterly uninteresting to her ; and she would sit down and sing and play to him

without reluctance whenever he asked her, even though his favourite tune was "Merrily danced the quaker's wife," and his chosen song "Billy Taylor was a brisk young fellow."

When the neighbours came to see her, she would sit in silent smiling endurance, and look at them, and listen, to them, and do her very best, until they all went away; and then she would cry half the night in her own room. But on Anthony Bubb she could not smile, to Nathaniel Wallop she could not listen; and when the more muscular and richer Nat drove from the field the weak but less offensive Tony, nearly driven to distraction by his perseverance, and by her father's urging her to "give over snubbing him, and to make up her mind to take him for better or worse, as he was a werry nice young man and not to be sneezed at," she became seriously ill; and having, when her father was frightened at her paleness, prevailed on him finally to send the nice young man about his business, she readily seconded the advice of the physician, and they went to Cheltenham for change of air and scene.

The accomplishments which she had acquired at Miss Perfect's academy were now her greatest comforts; and during her father's frequent absences, (for he never was long happy without

going to see what was doing at what he was pleased to call "his counting-house,") her harp and pianoforte were her only companions.

It so happened, however, that she one day met in the Well-walk one of her old school-fellows with whom she had been very intimate. She was now married, and at her house Miss Tatum spent many most delightful evenings; and there she first met Mr. Lorimer Lomax.

No one will wonder that *he* should admire the pretty and interesting heiress: her admirable playing and the melody of her voice were alone sufficient to captivate him. That he should in time seek her, engage her attention, woo her, and win her, notwithstanding a certain disparity of years, will perhaps appear less surprising, when it is remembered the life that she had lately led, and that the hateful persecutions of a Bubb and a Wallop threw into most favourable contrast the delicate and respectful attentions of one who united with polished and gentlemanlike manners, an amiable disposition, and no small taste for the science in which she so eminently excelled.

Miss Tatum resided in Cambray Place, within a few doors of Miss Titterton; and when Mr. Lomax on moonlight nights paraded that street with his light guitar, many supposed

that the deserted Clara was the fair object that attracted him.

After meeting that young lady at the house of Mr. O'Flaney, he became on terms of intimacy ; and she, knowing his former acquaintance with David, encouraged his visits, being all the time well aware of his attachment, and, indeed, engagement, to her fair neighbour. All this occurred after David's abrupt departure from Cheltenham ; and gentlemen of a certain age having no time to lose, everything was arranged during the two months which our hero passed so miserably in Arundel-street, Strand : Lomax, having heard from Rebecca the particulars of her former acquaintance with David, (for she was too *thoroughly* reformed and had too much good sense to conceal such events from the man who was to be her husband,) he, in a letter to Kilkenny, written the day before his marriage, briefly stated that his future wife had been "*a former flame*" of David's ; and thus was he led to suppose that he was cleared from the charge of murder and robbery, at the very moment when she for whose sake he had so earnestly prayed that his innocence would be established was lost to him for ever. After their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Lorimer Lomax

spent a few days at Malvern, and then returned to Cheltenham and established themselves in a house on the Promenade, where David found them in the manner we have already described.

CHAPTER XXV.

Is it be indiscreet to accompany lovers in the confidential rambles which immediately precede the wedding-day, ought we not, when we shut them up in their travelling-carriage, and see the lady's-maid safely seated by the gentleman's man in the rumble behind, to wish them every possible happiness, and making our best bow, leave them to themselves?

Let us then turn our attention to Mr. Cockle and his friend Kilkenny, who having been absent from Cockle Hall for some days, were, as we have already stated, to arrive there early on Saturday, for the purpose of receiving Mr. and Mrs. Dumps at dinner. In order to facilitate this arrangement, they were to leave the house of their present host on the evening of the eventful Friday, to sleep at an hotel twenty miles from Cockle Hall, and to ride home immediately after an early breakfast the next morning.

It was a clear moonlight evening toward

the end of May, when the friends left the hospitable roof of their home, and proceeded to search the land where they had agreed to pass the night and from whence in the morning they would only have an easy ride of about twenty miles.

"What a glorious night!" said Cockle; "and what a day for a wedding! Would you ever have supposed that poor David Dumps would be so fortunate?"

"No, certainly not," replied Kilkenny. "But indeed, I always really felt that, though we laughed at his distresses, a really tragic end awaited him. Where do they sleep to-night?"

"Indeed I don't know;—somewhere near town, I suppose."

"Well, strange as it may seem," said Kilkenny, "for no one has laughed at poor David's troubles more than myself, I shall be right glad to see him to-morrow."

"Nonsense! what can you suppose will happen to him?"

"Why, I hardly know: nothing beyond a damp bed you'd suppose possible; and even that, on such an occasion, would not be a provable mischance."

"Certainly not," replied Cockle; "and here we are at the hotel."

They rode into the inn yard, and pulled lustily at the bell. The hostler appeared to take care of their horses, and a waiter well known to both of them came forth to usher them into the house.

"Give *me* my old room," said Cockle, "and my friend can have one near me."

"Dear, dear!" cried the waiter, "how unlucky!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if we had but known you were coming! we should never have put them there new-married folks into that there room!"

"What folks—and what room?"

"Why, the room you always has, sir. A new-married couple arrived from London, and we put 'em in it; and we guv' the gentleman the room as your friend would have had, next to it, for a dressing-room."

"Well," said Cockle, "it can't be helped: give me and my friend some other well-aired rooms, which will answer our purpose as well."

John retired to give the necessary orders; and Cockle and Kilkenny awaited the arrival of supper in a very comfortable apartment before a blazing fire.

The host himself, a personage well to do in the world, and well known in the county,

condescended to place before Mr. Cockle the principal feature of his repast. This led, of course, to a recognition; and while Cockle was cutting off the wing of his roast fowl, he asked Mr. Noakes, as a matter of course, what news was stirring in the neighbourhood.

"Have you been full lately?" inquired Kilkenny.

"Far from it, sir," replied Noakes.

"But," said Cockle, "we are not your *only* inmates to-night, I presume?"

"Oh no, not *quite* that," replied Noakes.

"Have you many in the house?"

"Only two—a lady and gentleman, a man and maid-servant,—a bridal party, in fact."

"Ay, so I remember your waiter told us: whence do they come?"

"From London."

"Do you know the name?"

"Oh yes,—a very odd name—Dumps!"

Cockle and Kilkenny looked at each other, but said nothing; and after a short delay the host retired.

"Well," said Kilkenny after he and his friend had been left quietly to the enjoyment of a good fire and a bottle of wine; "this is the oddest coincidence!"

"Say nothing about it," replied Cockle,

“and they will never know we have accidentally been inmates of the same hotel: they have retired to rest long ago,—it is now very late.”

“Well,” replied Kilkenny, “I have no inclination to leave this fire; let us for once in a way have a comfortable chat.”

“With all my heart,” replied Cockle; “but we will ring for the waiter, order chamber candles and slippers, and allow no one to sit up for us.”

About one o'clock Mr. Cockle took his chamber candle, and still talking and still laughing, loitered with it in his hand.

“What noise is that?” said he suddenly.

“Noise? I heard none,” replied Kilkenny.

“Hush!” said Cockle.

“What can you mean?”

“Why, I heard a door open and shut.”

“Singular event, in an hotel of this magnitude!”

“Do be quiet,” said Cockle: “I hear somebody pacing along the gallery.”

“Well, and if you do,” replied Kilkenny, “you do not mean to pretend that you expect a captain of banditti?”

“No, no,—but listen.”

A voice was heard on the stairs, calling

“Chambermaid!” and after several repetitions of the cry, the unfortunate damsel roused herself, and wrapping around her something proper, descended and inquired what was wanted.

“There’s a strong smell of fire,” said the wanderer.

“Fire, sir!—no, sir!—Where, sir?—Don’t smell it, sir!”

“I smell it very strong,—a smell of burnt wood,” cried the stranger.

“Burnt wood,” whispered Cockle, pointing to their wood fire; “we are the delinquents—hush!”

“Don’t smell it all,” said the housemaid.
“Every soul’s gone to bed, and every fire has been out several hours.”

“Indeed!” replied the fire-seeker; “then it is more serious than I had supposed: it must be some massive beam smouldering.”

“Lord, sir! how can you have them fancies!”

“I smell it strong,” replied David (for there was no mistaking his voice); “and Miss Titterton smells it worse than I do!”

“Miss who?” exclaimed the chambermaid with an air of offended dignity.

“Mrs. Dumps, I mean,” said David in confusion, correcting himself; “Mrs. Dumps is very much alarmed.”

"Lau! what noses you must have!" cried Betty. "If I'd been you, I wouldn't have smelt nothing if the town had been in tinder!"

"Do you hear?" said Kilkenny.

"Hush!" replied Cockle: "it would be cruel to let him know we are here."

"I'll tell you what," exclaimed Mr. Dumps, "I must and will speak to the master of the house—call him directly, for I do smell it shocking strong."

Betty went away to call the host; and David, with his chamber candle in his hand, and clad very much as people are who ought to be in bed, paced wearily up and down the long gallery.

At length the host made his appearance, wrapped up in a dressing-gown, and looking by no means pleased with his untimely tormentor. Still his urbanity of manner did not forsake him, and with the utmost politeness he inquired what the gentleman and lady could possibly want.

"We smell fire, sir," replied David.

"Fire!"

"Yes,—wood,—a beam, something out of sight: it will break out by-and-by."

The host sniffed, as in duty bound, all over the house, and then returned to assure him that there was no cause for alarm.

“ I certainly *do* smell fire,” persisted David.

“ Well,” said the host, “ a party accustomed to burn wood at home have had a wood fire here to-night.”

“ Now that accounts for it,” replied David : “ why did you not tell me so before ?”

“ There was no cause for alarm, I assure you,” said he ; “ it did not occur to me before to mention the wood fire ; but fire is what I dread least in this house.”

“ Indeed !”

“ Yes.”

“ Nothing so horrible !” said David.

“ But I have a reservoir at the top of the house, which holds sufficient to put out the worst fire that we are ever likely to see.”

“ Well,” exclaimed Mr. Dumps, taking up his candle, which had been placed on a table, “ that is a *very* great comfort. I’ll go and tell Mrs. Dumps that ; and it will make her easier in her mind : for certainly we *did* both smell fire.”

“ Go and quiet the lady’s mind, I beg,” said the host.

“ I will endeavour,” replied David ; and in a few moments the host had gone back to the place from whence he came, and David had again retired to the bridal chamber to argue Mrs. Dumps out of her apprehension of fire,

and to assure her that, had such a calamity existed, there was water enough immediately over their heads effectually to stop its progress.

As soon as the house was again quiet, Cockle opened the door of his sitting-room, and softly treading on tiptoe, he and Kilkenny proceeded to the apartments provided for them. •

There is something peculiarly striking in the deep repose and silence of a large and much-frequented hotel. How many people from different parts of the globe may be collected under that roof who *never*, by the most strange and unforeseen combination of circumstances, can *all* meet together again ! People of the most opposite pursuits and habits,—the young, the old, the rich, the poor ; the luxuriously rich, cavilling at accommodations so inferior to those that await them at home ; and the abjectly poor, who have no home to go to, and who leave the hotel to go forth and buffet with the world !—all pausing on some long or, to them, eventful journey ; all sleeping, or trying to sleep, ere they go forward to struggle in a career which may end in disappointment, or to mingle with friends who may flatter and betray. As we pass along the passage of a crowded hotel, we peep into every pair of boots placed like sentinels at the different doors, and we think to ourselves what tales could be unravelled were each

pair to step forth and tell the history of its career.

The inn where we now find ourselves was, however, but thinly peopled, and the repose which for a time prevailed was the more natural. Cockle and Kilkenny having exchanged a whispered "good night," each closed his eyes, and very speedily sought his pillow; and, after a ride in the keen air by moonlight, both were soon buried in profound slumber.

But hark! what a shrill scream rings through the hotel where we have lingered for the last few hours! So earnest, so piercing was the cry, that in one moment it roused every inmate of the large mansion, and it contained not one sleeper.

What could it be! All was dark, and for some few moments no sound was heard; but then again the same shrill voice rang through every chamber. The host, who had already been once roused, turned round and listened, and tried to go to sleep again, persuading himself it was all fancy. But Cockle and Kilkenny, and every waiter, boots, and chambermaid, huddled on whatever came to hand, (and in some instances that was very little,) and met at the top of the principal staircase.

"I hear nothing!" said Cockle.

"Oh!" cried the chambermaid, "but there has been such cries!"

"It is all nonsense ;—the peacock in the yard,
—or——"

"Hush !" interrupted Kilkenny ; and the same cry was repeated, and actually rang through the vast mansion !

"This way," cried Cockle ; and, led by the sound, he proceeded along a corridor, followed by Kilkenny and the rest.

"Good heavens !" exclaimed he at length, pausing in dismay, "the sound proceeds from the room I have been accustomed to occupy. And listen,—it has subsided into low murmurs of pain, or bursts of hysteric laughter !"

"The bridal chamber !" whispered the chambermaid, as white as a sheet, and trembling from head to foot.

"Look !" cried Kilkenny, pointing to the floor ; and from the crevice of the door trickled a dark liquid, which ran along the oak boards to the opposite side of the passage.

"Blood !" cried the chambermaid, fainting away.

"Blood !" gasped the waiter, trying to catch her.

"Blood !" shouted the boots in an agony of fear.

"Blood !" ejaculated Kilkenny in an accent of painful surprise.

"Blood ?" said Cockle in a tone of inquiry ;

“ then we must force the door, for it is fastened within ;” and, stepping back some paces, he raised his foot and applied it so vehemently against the woodwork, that it at length yielded.

A fresh stream gushed forth as the portal opened.

“ More blood !” cried the waiter ; and he dropt the chambermaid.

“ More blood !” groaned the boots.

All rushed eagerly forward into the bridal chamber, which was dimly lighted, and there was a mysterious gurgling sound which bewildered them. At first nothing was distinct ; but they soon perceived Clara, attired just as she had left her bed, crouching down in the distant corner of the room, while the bridegroom, equally in *dishabille*, stood over her holding a large umbrella !

At this moment the host in a breathless state joined the party, exclaiming,

“ I can explain the cause of alarm. The reservoir at the top of the house, containing hundreds of hogsheads of water, has burst immediately over these apartments.”

“ Shut them out !” cried David, peering from under his umbrella, and shocked at this untimely intrusion, though the water poured in torrents through the ceiling.

"Let them in," exclaimed Clara, laughing and screaming by turns: "I'm half drowned."

"You would not, surely," whispered David, pointing to the half-clad figures grouped around the chamber door.

"Indeed I would," replied Clara. "Here, chambermaid, fetch me a dry blanket, and let us have a good fire immediately in another room."

The gentlemen, of course, retired as soon as the real cause of disturbance had been ascertained, and the chambermaid very soon prepared more comfortable quarters for the bride and bridegroom.

"Well!" said Clara, as she sat with her feet on the fender, prudentially sipping *something warm* after her unexpected shower-bath, "I am glad to see you can laugh at our adventure."

"I can laugh with you," replied David, stirring up his tumbler of brandy and water; "but had such an event befallen me alone, I'm certain I should have died."

"More shame for you! But I hope to make you always laugh at the lighter ills of life; and as to weightier troubles, if it be our lot to encounter them, for my sake you must meet them bravely,—conquer them if you can——"

"Ay, but there are some which we cannot conquer."

“Endure them with resignation, then.”

“For your sake, Clara, I will try and be all you wish.”

“Then we will always date the dawn of our happiness *from the Flood*.”

“Do you think we can keep this ridiculous accident secret?” said David.

“Not a chance of it,” replied Clara, laughing; “for among those who peeped into our chamber I distinctly saw Mr. Cockle and his friend.”

“Indeed! Then I can never face the party to-morrow.”

“Indeed we will,” replied Clara; “and I will show you how to blunt the edge of ridicule. We will laugh so heartily at the absurdity of our own dilemma, that we will defy them to outlaugh us.”

“An excellent plan; and had I always followed it, I should have made light of many events which seemed to me miseries, and joined in many a laugh which almost made me cry.”

“Well, there is no occasion to cry to-night, for I trust we shall neither of us feel the worse to-morrow.”

“I hope not,” replied David, laughing; “but you know all this comes of being married on a Friday!”

CONCLUSION.

AND now to conclude. We all meet at Cockle Hall to offer congratulations to the bride and bridegroom, and possibly to laugh over their untimely adventure. Had we been writing a serious story, we should now be obliged to gather together all the various little threads of our discourse, enter into most embarrassing explanations, and point our moral.

Our story has, however, been a mere extravaganza—a comic farce, after a more serious drama; and though indeed in our memoirs of the early life of Mr. David Dumps a little moral may be just *hinted* and *implied*, none will be *insisted on*.

Cockle Hall being twenty miles on the Cheltenham side of Bath, a summons had been sent to the Lomaxes and O'Flaneys; and they having availed themselves of Mr. Cockle's invitation to dine and sleep, considerably added to Mr. Dumps's annoyance when he arrived with his bride.

“ Now, remember,” said Clara, ere she quitted their travelling carriage and led the way into the house, “ I ’ll have no melancholy looks, no creeping into corners because you are laughed at, thereby giving people a new cause for ridicule.”

“ I won’t, if I can help it, my dear.”

“ Help it !—do as I do—follow me—laugh when I laugh—and anticipate all they intended to say.”

“ If I laugh when you laugh, my love,” replied David, offering his arm, “ I shall be always laughing.”

“ So much the better.”

“ Then I ’m sure nobody will know me.”

“ Then they ’ll give me credit for having effected a happy transformation.”

They were in a moment surrounded by their friends, whose hearty congratulations Clara speedily interrupted by a detail of their recent trouble, telling her story with a comic effect which completely threw into shade the ridicule of other people, and laughing with an unaffected joyousness peculiar to herself.

And there must have been a spell in that laugh, for it found an echo even in David ! His consternation, however, may be imagined when Clara thus addressed Lady Betty O’Flaney:

“ I need not introduce my husband to your ladyship, I know ; you have met before.”

“ Never mind, Mr. Dumps,” said the lady good-humouredly : “ let them laugh at our little adventure if it amuses them ;—I was sorry you suffered so much annoyance on account of your mistake.”

“ He always seems to get into trouble at hotels,” replied Clara.

“ Then,” said Mrs. Lomax, “ never go to one again : when you are tired of Bath, pay us a visit.”

The *déjeûné*, or rather the early dinner, passed pleasantly away, and the equipage of Mr. and Mrs. Dumps appeared to carry them on to Bath, where lodgings had been secured for them in Gay Street. There was a time when David would have preferred the abbey churchyard ; but “ from *grave* to *Gay*” was a transition which had been accomplished by Clara.

The sun shone brightly ; and Cockle Hall appeared in David’s eyes a very different place to that in which he had spent a long dreary day a few months before. He bade a cheerful adieu to the friends who collected round the door, handed his wife gaily into the carriage, stepped lightly in after her, and, as it drove off, leant back and joined Clara in her laughter.

“ You may well laugh,” said he ; “ I ’m sure you can hardly know me.”

“ You have acted your part admirably !—now you must never relapse into gloom.”

“ Nay,” replied David, looking serious ; “ in *this* world, Clara——”

“ I know what you are going to say ; but you misconceive my meaning. Never impute want of feeling to those who are most merry. No one could feel a serious misfortune more acutely than myself : but do, pray, in future, keep serious grief for serious grievances.”

“ But sometimes it is difficult not to be seriously annoyed at what others may deem trifles.”

“ I don’t see that,” replied Clara.

“ Why, for instance :—a hoax—a practical joke——”

“ Oh, if an intimate friend injudiciously annoys you, try and forget the annoyance, remembering that he could have no bad motive. If a hoax is attempted by one unauthorised to take such a liberty——”

“ Ay,—what then ?”

“ Oh, *then*, were I a man, I ’d find a way to correct impertinence, without a diminution of my own cheerfulness.”

“ You are right,” said David. “ Well, then, there are anonymous letters ?”

“ Surely, you would not suffer an anony-

mous letter, that last and lowest weapon of cowardly blackguardism, to annoy you !”

“ Why,” replied David, “ not one addressed *o myself*; but they are sometimes addressed to our associates, to lower us in *their* estimation.”

“ Well, then, contemptible as I consider the *writer* of an anonymous letter, I think that the person who could for one moment be influenced by one is quite as bad !”

“ I see you make light of all my little grievances.”

“ And so shall you in future,” replied Clara. *And so he did !*

But, instead of spending the honeymoon with Mr. and Mrs. Dumps at Bath, we must now take a parting glance at the elders we have so long neglected.

Old Tatum was delighted when his daughter married a gentleman, and entered a society which by education she was fitted to adorn. He thought he should miss her, but he did not : on the contrary, though he never allowed it even to himself, he felt it a relief when he could sit alone at dinner, eat peas with his knife, and be as vulgar as he pleased.

Mr. Titterton did miss Clara sadly : her birdlike song and merry laugh were heard no more ; and when absent from the new-married couple, his chief solace and amusement was

forming little plans for future meetings. Mr. Mildmay was almost as fond of Clara as her father, and at his death he left her husband the whole of his property, on condition that he changed his name to Mildmay.

And now, three years after their marriage, we find Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay sitting in their nursery. Two girls are calmly reposing ; and David is nursing on his knee his son and heir, Master Johnny, now two months old.

“What a nice good little boy it is !” exclaimed the fond father.

“Like his papa,” replied Clara, laughing.

“Not a bit of it : his dimples are yours. It is early to think of it, perhaps, but I’ll tell you what I have been thinking of : I don’t quite know what profession to choose for him.”

Clara’s laughter interrupted him.

“Well, Clara, I knew you would laugh ; but the boy must *be something*. If he have *health and intellect*, his independent fortune may preserve him from many of the *real* ills of life ; and it must be our care that *occupation* shall preserve him from *imaginary* evils.”

THE END.

